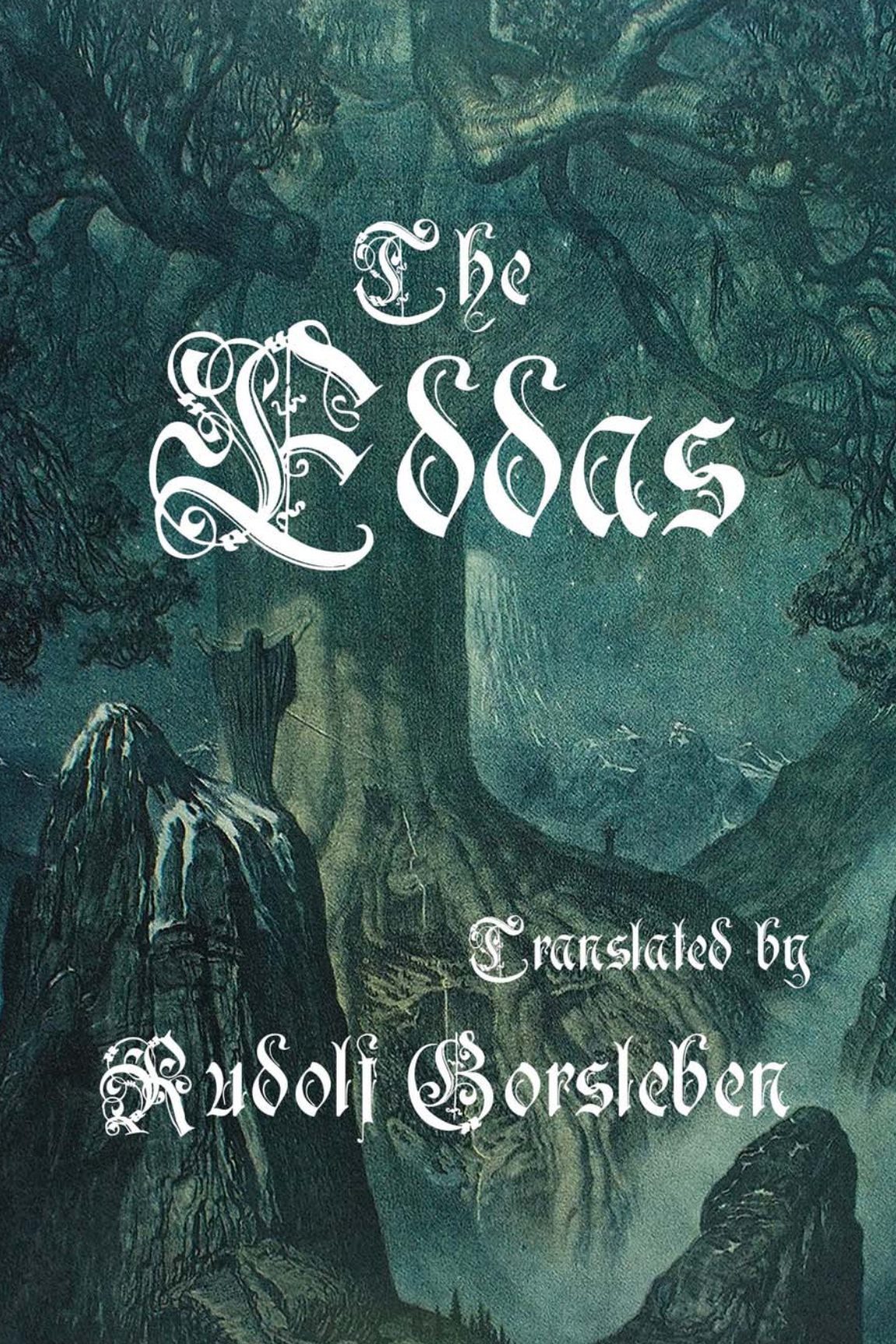
The
Eddas
Translated by
Rudolf Gorsleben

BERSERKER
BOOKS

THE EDDAS

Translated by

Rudolf John Gorsleben

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THE DECEPTION OF THE GODS

For Mrs. Elisabeth

A man named Golf was a king—very wise and a man of secret knowledge. For a long time, he had been greatly puzzled as to why the Aesir were so immensely wealthy, for all things flourished entirely according to his will. He wondered whether this arose from their own power or whether divine forces were at work, to which the Aesir made sacrifices. Therefore, one day he set out on a journey to Asgard, but traveled in secret; he disguised himself as an old man and hid himself in this way. But the Aesir became aware of this, for they possessed the gift of prophecy and knew of his journey even before he arrived. Then they met him with an illusion for the eyes: when he came to a hill, he suddenly beheld a hall so tall that he could barely see over it. Its roof, however, was covered with golden shields as a roof is usually covered with shingles, just as the poet sings that Valhalla is covered with shields:

> And from the ridge, to ward off stone-throws,
> sleepers' shingles—the creation of a thoughtful artist!

At the hall's gate, Golf met a man who was juggling knives, keeping seven of them in the air at once. The man asked him his name. Golf called himself Wandermut; he said he had come along wild paths and was seeking a place to spend the night. Then he asked to whom this hall belonged.

The man replied that it belonged to the king: "And I will lead you to him so you may see him; there you can ask his name yourself."

The man turned and walked ahead into the hall, and as Golf followed him, the gate slammed shut behind his heels. There he saw many halls and, within them, a great multitude of people. Some of the men were playing games, some were drinking, and still others were practicing with weapons. He looked around. Much of what he saw seemed unnerving to him, and he spoke these words to himself:

> Look carefully at doors and gates,
> be cautious before you enter;

Who knows if your enemy
has not long been lying in wait
in the hallway of the house.

Now he noticed three raised seats, one above the other, and a man sat on each one. Golf asked what the names of these captains were. The man who was guiding him replied: "The one on the lowest raised seat is a king and is called HIGH; the one on the next seat is called EVENLY HIGH; and the one on the highest seat is called THIRD."

Now the one called HIGH asked the newcomer what other business had brought him there; he was entitled to food and drink like everyone else here in this lofty hall.

But Wandermut said he wished first to find out if there was a wise one here within. HIGH replied that no one would emerge from here unscathed who was not wiser than they, and said:

Stand there, stranger, as long as you ask;
but let only those who answer sit!"

Now Wandermut began to ask: "Who is the supreme and oldest of all the gods?"

HIGH answered: "He is called Allfather in our language, but in ancient Asgard he had twelve other names."

Then Wandermut asked: "Where is this god? And what is he capable of? Or what great deeds has he accomplished?"

HIGH replied: "He lives through all ages and rules over all worlds and governs all things, great and small!"

EVENLY HIGH added: "He created heaven and earth and air and all that belongs to them."

And THIRD concluded: "But this is the greatest of all: that he created man and gave him a soul that shall live and never perish, even if the body decays in the earth or is burned to ashes. And such a life shall be granted to all who are found to be rightly created,

and will be with Him Himself in the place called Wohltat, or the Mountain of Salvation. But the lowly people go to Hel and from there to Nebelheim, which is down in the ninth world."

Wandermut asked further: "What did Allfather do before heaven and earth were even created?"

HIGH answered: "He was with the Ice Giants."

Wandermut asked: "But what was there before the beginning?" Or how did it all begin? Or what was there first?

HIGH replied: "It was as is said in the song of the Seeress's vision:"

> It was in ancient times, when nothing existed,
> There was no sand, no sea, no cooling waves,
> No earth yet existed, nor the sky above,
> Only a yawning abyss and not a blade of grass anywhere.

EVENLY HIGH added: "Through many ages, before the earth was even created, Nebelheim already existed. In its center springs a well, called the Spring Cauldron, and from it flow all the streams bearing the sacred names."

But THIRD concluded: "Even before Nebelheim, there existed a world called Flammenheim; it is bright and hot, it blazes and burns,and remains inaccessible to all those who have no home within it. He calls himself Black, the one who sits there at the border of his realm; he holds a blazing sword in his hand, and at the end of the world he will come and wage war against and defeat all the gods and burn all worlds with fire. So it is said in the Song of the Seeress's Vision:"

> From the south rides the Black One with scorching flames,
> His sword sparkles like the sun of battle,
> Rocks shatter like falling giants;
> Hel devours mankind, the heavens gape wide.

Wandermut asked further: “Who came and went before beings existed and the human race multiplied?”

HIGH replied: “Those streams, which we call waves of light, had traveled so far from their source that the bubbling life rolling along with them hardened like the sinter that falls from the fire. Then these streams became ice, and because this ice stood still and no longer moved, the streams froze one upon the other. But the moisture that arose from this cold, however, also congealed into ice, and so ice piled upon ice across the chasm, which was that yawning passage, the Nothing.”

EVENLY HIGH added: “The northern part of the World Abyss now filled completely with the mass and weight of the ice and frost, and within it swirled spray and gas; but the southern part of the World Abyss was tempered by the sparks and sprites that flew over from Flammenheim.”

THIRD, however, concluded: “Just as the cold originates from Nebelheim, along with all wild and powerful things, so was the part facing Flammenheim warm and bright, as mild as still air. When the spray of frost met the breath of warmth, so it melted and dripped; then the falling drops came to life through the power of the One who had sent heat and cold, and took the form of a man and called himself Immer. From him sprang the race of the ice giants; and they call him Primordial Power. Thus it is said in the shorter song of the Seeress’s vision:

> The soothsayers are of Waldwolf’s blood,
> The seers who grant wishes are of the Wishing Tree,
> The children of Schwarzhaupt are skilled sorcerers,
> From Immer’s lineage the giants descend.

“And thus replied Waberer, the giant, when Wotan questioned him: ‘Where, then, did Urgewalt, the first of the giants, come from?’”

Tell me this, Wise One.
From the eternal primeval torrent,
icy spray spouted,
from which this giant arose;
he became the origin of our lineage:
Thus unformed we are all now.

Wandermut then asked: "But how did his lineage multiply? Or how did it come to be that so many giants arose later? Or do you consider him a god?"

EVENLY HIGH replied: "By no means did we regard him as a god, for he was evil like his entire kind, whom we call the Ice Giants. Thus it is said: when he once slept, he began to sweat, and from beneath his left arm grew a male and a female, and one of his feet begot a son with the other."

Then Wandermut asked: "Where did Immer dwell, and on what did he live?"

HIGH replied: "Next, the ice continued to drip and transformed into a cow named Abundance, and four streams of milk flowed from the creases of her udder and nourished Immer."

Then Wandermut said: "But what did the cow feed on?"

HIGH replied: "She licked the ice blocks, which were salty, and on the first day that she licked the blocks, a man's hair emerged from them in the evening; on the second day, a man's head; and on the third day, a whole man—he was called the Born One. He was fair of face, tall, and strong, and begot a son whom he named the Reborn One. The latter took Bestla—that is, the best Weaver, daughter of the giant Bösdorn, and fathered three sons with her: one is called Oden or Odhin or Wotan and has many other names; the other is called Wille; the third is called Weh. And this is my belief: that this Oden and his brothers rule over heaven and earth; we remember him when we call upon him. Thus we name the god whom we recognize as the greatest and most powerful, and you, too, may call upon him thus."

Wandermut asked further: “What, then, was the relationship between him and Immer, and which of them remained the more powerful?”

HIGH replied: “The sons of the Reborn One slew the giant Immer, and when he fell, so much blood flowed from his wounds that they drowned the entire race of the ice giants in it, save for one who escaped with his household managed to escape; the giants call him Gebärgewalt. He boarded an ark with his wife and saved himself, and from him descends the younger race of ice giants, as the song says:”

> In the beginning of time,
> long before the Earth, Gebärgewalt lived;
> As the earliest I know,
> how the wise one hid himself
> in a boat from the floods.

Then Wandermut asked: “And what did the sons of the Reborn accomplish that makes you believe they are gods?”

HIGH replied: “There is much to say about this. They took Immer and carried him into the midst of Nothingness, the yawning expanse of the cosmos, and fashioned the world from him: from his blood the seas and waters; the earth was made from his flesh, the mountains from his bones; rock and rubble they created from his teeth, his jawbone, and the shattered bones.”

EVENLY HIGH added: “From the blood that flowed from his wounds and was lost, they girded and strengthened the earth and laid the sea in a circle around it, so that it might seem impossible for most people to cross over.”

But the THIRD concluded: “Finally, they took his skull, shaped the heavens from it, and set it upon the earth with its four corners. Under each horn, however, they placed a dwarf; these are called: East, West, North, and South. Then they gathered the sparks and sparks of fire that flew over from the Land of Flames and cast them into the yawning abyss. They also assigned places to

all the celestial bodies; some fixed in the heavens, others loose above the heavens, as the ancient teachings instruct, so that the days might be marked and the years counted. Of this, the Song of the Seer's Vision sings:"

> The Sun did not know where its dwelling was,
> The Moon did not know the power it possessed,
> The stars did not know where their places were.
> Such was the state of things before the gods existed.

Then Wandermut spoke: "These are great things I hear of, a mighty work and wondrously told. But what, then, was the nature of the earth?"

HIGH replied: "It is perfectly round, and all around its outer edge the deep sea winds. The gods gave the land along the sea coasts to the giants, or Jötnar—that is, the devourers—to cultivate, but around the land in the center of the earth they built a ring wall to protect it from the giants, and they used the shores of the sea to form this fortress, which they named Mitgart. They cast his brain into the air and made the clouds from it, just as the song says:"

> From Urvold's flesh the Earth was created,
> from his blood the roaring sea
> From his legs the mountains, the trees from his hair,
> from his skull the serene sky,
> From his brow the benevolent gods
> built Mitgart for the human race,
> The clouds arose—those storm-tossed ones—
> from the giant's head's tangled brain.

Wandermut said: "It seems to me the gods have accomplished great things, for they created heaven and earth, set the sun and stars, and separated day from night. But whence did the people who inhabit this earth come from?"

HIGH replied: "Once, when the Sons of Evenly High went to the seashore, they found two trees. They uprooted them and fashioned humans from them. Wotan, the first, gave them soul

and life; Wille, the second, gave them reason and movement; Weh, the third, gave them form, speech, hearing, and sight; they also gave them distinct identities and names, calling the man Asch and the woman Elma, and from them descended the human race, to whom Mitgard was given as a dwelling. Thereupon the gods built themselves a castle in the center of the earth and called it Asgard, but humans call it Troy. There dwell the gods and their kin, and many deeds and events were to take place among them in the future, both in the heavens and on earth. There in the heavens is also that place called the Heavenly Hall, and when Wotan takes his seat on the high throne there, he surveys all the worlds and the goings-on of all mankind and understands all the things he sees there. His wife is Fricka, which means 'Beloved,' and from their castle comes the race we call the Aesir, who dwell in Asgard, the ancient one, and all the realms situated there, and this lineage is of divine nature. And that is why Wotan is called All-Father, All-Begetter— because he is the father of all gods and men and of all that has been accomplished through his power. Erda, his daughter, is also his wife; from her he begot his first son, and that is the Aesir god Donar. Strength and exuberance follow him, so that he triumphs over all that lives."

Wandermut asked further: "What did Allfather do once Asgard was built?"

HIGH replied: "He began by establishing judges' seats and commanded the Aesir to judge according to the ancient rights of mankind and to watch over the institutions in Asgard, and this was at the place called Ida—or Eden, that is, the Field of the Gods—in the midst of the stronghold. Their next task was to to build a sanctuary where their twelve seats stood, as well as a high seat for Allfather. This sanctuary is the most beautiful and largest structure on earth, made entirely of gold, both inside and out. People call this place the Home of Joy. From it they built another hall, which became the sanctuary of the goddesses, and this, too, was a marvelous structure that people call the Home of Love. Finally,

they established workshops, set up forges and smelting furnaces, and fashioned hammers, anvils, and tongs, along with all other tools. Now they worked with iron, stone, and wood, and such a modest quantity of that ore called gold that they possessed all their household goods and riding gear made of gold; and this era is called the Golden Age, until it came to an end with the arrival of the Nomen, those women who came from Giantheim.

"When the gods had completed everything, they took their seats, reflected, deliberated, and decided how the dwarves had come into being deep within the earth . They had been created first and found life in the flesh of the Primordial Force, where they were like maggots. But following the gods' decision, they now received the intellect and form of wise men and continued to dwell beneath the earth and within the rock. Thus says the song of the Seeress's vision:

> Then the eternal Aesir, the Most Holy Gods,
> hastened to the judgment seat and held counsel
> on who should create the race of dwarves
> from the blood of the primordial chaos, its arms and legs.
> Then Mutsauger was deemed a worthy master,
> and Döser as the second for such dwarves

"These were the dwarves that Mutsauger begot:

> Morgen and Mittag, Mitternacht, Abend,
> Neulicht and Niederlicht, Nebler and Nächtler,
> Räuschler and Strecker, Necker, and Schlecker,
> along with Neuer and Neurat—
>
> I would have named them all, as is right
> the dwarves' advisor and judge.
> Many more were born in human form,
> dwarves of the earth, as Döser described them:
>
> Alb and Uralb, Ober- and Jungalb,
> Wolfalb and Windalb and Alben as guardians,

Schlaudieb, Schnappebald, Schnellimzank, Schlaps,
Pfeilgeschwind, Streitgewandt, Pfiffig and Stracks,
Heftig and Hurtig, Fürwitz and Fuchs,
Frischgesicht, Flinkerat, Resourceful and Swift.

Finally, the dwarves of the Nebler branch,
down to Lobesam-Ahn, must be mentioned to the people
he led his clan from solid rock
through swampy depths up into the valleys.

From him come Dripper, Defiant, and Slayer;
Sculptor, Farmer, Distiller, and Tanner;
Cooler, Clarifier, Beater, and Stopper;
Spark Tester, Oak Shield, Iron Smith, Dyer,
so knowledge teaches us, as long as the world endures,
for all time, of the race of dwarves.

Wandermut asked further: "Where is the most noble and sacred place of the gods?"

HIGH answered: "It is by the ash tree called the World Tree. It is also called the Bringer of Healing, the Bringer of Terror. There the gods hold court every day."

Wandermut asked: "What is there to say about this place?"

EVENLY HIGH spoke: "This ash tree is the greatest and finest of all trees; its branches spread across the entire world and tower above the heavens. Three roots hold the tree upright and extend far and wide: one toward the Aesir, the other toward the Ice Giants, where the Nothing, the yawning chasm gaped, while the third stretches out over Nebelheim. Beneath this root lies the well Spring-Kessel. The Envy-Worm Niedertracht gnaws at it from below. Beneath the second root, however, which reaches to the Ice Giants, stands a well in which wisdom and reason are hidden, and it is called Mime, that is, "I-Myself" or also "Memory," who owns this well. He is full of wisdom because he drinks the water of this well from the Gellerhorn. Once, Allfather came to Mime—that is

to say, to himself—and asked for a drink from the well of Memory, but this could only be granted to him when he gave his one eye as a pledge, just as it is said in the song of the Seeress' Vision:

> All I know—I know how you, Wotan,
> forfeit your eye for purer wisdom!
> Memory now drinks the mead each morning
> through Walvater's eye.
> —Do you know of this?

"But the first root of the ash tree stretches across the sky, and beneath it lies that well, which is the holiest of all—the Well of Urda, that is, of Becoming, or the Beginning, or the Root, . There the gods have their place of judgment, and on every day the Aesir ride across the Beberast Bridge, which is also called the Aesir Bridge.

"These are the names of the stallions on which the Aesir ride: Roaring Wind is the best, and Wotan rides him; the next is called Smooth-Hair, the third is called Dazzler, the fourth Glast, the fifth Runner, the sixth Silver-Plaits, the seventh Iron-Fetter , the eighth is Geißel, the ninth is Scharrhuf, the tenth is Goldmähne, and the eleventh is Leichtfuß. The twelfth, Balder's stallion, was burned along with him. Donar, however, goes on foot to the court; to do so, he must wade through the rivers bearing the following names:

> Wiege and Wanne, both as warm as a bath;
> Thor wades through them daily,
> when he goes to deliver judgment at the World Tree,
> the sacred ash, where the Bridge of the Gods trembles,
> scorched by flame, and the sacred waters are hot.

Then Wandermut asked: "Does fire burn on the Beberast Bridge?"

HIGH replied: "What you see glowing red in the rainbow is burning fire, for the mountain giants would ascend to heaven if all who wished to could cross Beberast, since there are many beautiful places in heaven; but they all stand under the protection of the

gods. Thus there stands a beautiful hall beneath the ash tree by the Well of Becoming. From this hall come three maidens named Urda, Werdandi, and Skuld—or, in today's language: Wurde, Wer den, and Geworden. They determine the fate and lifespan of all people, and we call them the Norns. But there are other Norns as well who come to every newborn child to shape its fate; some are of divine nature, others of elven lineage, and still others are of the race of dwarves, as is said in the song:

> I consider the Norns
> to be of diverse origins;
> not all are of the same source:
> some are Asen, others are Elven,
> and some are Dwarven powers.

Wandermut said here: "If the Norns determine the fates of men, they shape their lots with excessive inequality; some have a good life and abundance, some have little land and praise; some live long, others short."

HIGH spoke: "The good Norns of good origin bring about good fortune; but when men fall into misfortune, it is the evil Norns that reign."

Wandermut asked further: What other curious things are there to report about the ash tree?

HIGH replied: "There is much to be said about it. An eagle sits in the branches of the ash tree, the all-wise one; between its eyes sits the hawk Wetterfahl. But the rat Nager runs back and forth along the ash tree, carrying slanderous words between the eagle and the worm of envy, who is the very embodiment of wickedness. Four stags graze in the branches of the ash tree and nibble at the shoots; their names are: Delusion, Sleep, Storm, and Blow. And so many snakes dwell in the cauldron near the Worm of Envy that no tongue could count them. So it is said in the song:

The ash tree endures more misdeeds
than people might think, and more misfortune;
In the crown the stags, in the trunk decay,
in the roots the Envy Worm gnaws.

"It also says there:

And more worms swarm beneath the tree
than the foolish race of men suspects.

"It is further reported that the Norns who dwell at the Well of Becoming draw water from it and, together with the damp earth surrounding the well, they sprinkle the ash tree so that its branches may never wither or rot. But this water is so sacred that all things that come into contact with it become as white as the membrane that lies inside the eggshell. The song says of this:

I know an ash tree called the World Tree,
A whitish mist moistens its crown,
From it falls the dew that fertilizes the depths,
Evergreen it stands by the Well of Wurt.

"The dew that falls from it onto the earth, people call 'honeydew,' and the bees feed on it. Two birds, too, feed from the Well of the Wurt, or the Well of Becoming; both are called swans, and the bird species of that name descends from them."

Then Wandermut said: "Can you reveal great things about the heavens? What other significant places are there besides the Well of Becoming?"

HIGH replied: "There are many magnificent places there. There is a dwelling called Albenheim, where the beings we call Light Elves dwell, but the Dark Elves dwell underground and differ from them in appearance and even more so in nature. The Light Elves are more lovely to behold than the sun, while the Dark Elves, on the other hand, are blacker than pitch. There is a dwelling called Breitblick, and there is no place brighter than this one. There is a dwelling called Gleißner, and its walls, supports, and columns are

all made of red gold, while the roof is made of silver. There is yet another called "Himmelsburg"; it stands at the edge of the heavens, like Brükkenkopf, where Beberast reaches the sky. There is also a great hall called "Walls Stätte" or "Valhalla"—that is the hall of the dead. This is Wotan's hall. The gods built it and covered it with pure silver. Here in this hall stands also the Heavenly Arbour, Wotan's high seat, and when Allfather sits in this chair, he sees across all worlds. At the southern end of the heavens lies, finally, the Hall of Good Deeds or the Mountain of Salvation, the brightest of all and more resplendent than the sun; it will still stand even when both heaven and earth have passed away, and this place is inhabited by the good and righteous people of all ages. Thus speaks the Seeress:"

> Already I behold a hall, like a radiant sun,
> Covered in gold, spared from the blaze,
> The hall where the proven dwell in bliss,
> And enjoy honors for all eternity.

Wandermut asked further: "But who guards this place when the Black One's blaze consumes heaven and earth?"

HIGH replied: "It is taught that a second heaven arches over the first, called the Counter-Heaven, and yet a third above this one, which they call the Blue Expanse; and in this last heaven, it seems to us, lies the place that we now believe to be inhabited only by the Light-Elves."

Wandermut asked: "Who are the Aesir in whom men are to place their trust?"

HIGH answered: "There are twelve Aesir of divine nature."

EVENLY HIGH added: "No less sacred are the Aesir women, and no less is their power!"

But THIRD continued: "Wotan is the highest and oldest of the Aesir; he rules over all things, and although other gods also possess power, they all serve him as children serve their father. Fricka, his

wife, knows the fate of every human being, though she reveals it to no one, as the song says, where Wotan himself speaks to the Aesir who called himself Locker or Luge:

> Why do you rage so, Luge,
> and provoke the wrath of the Giver so madly?
> I know the secrets of the worlds as well as he does.

"Wotan is called Allfather because he is the father of all gods, and Walfather because all those who fall on the battlefield find themselves among his chosen sons. He destines them for Valhalla or the Hall of Love, and there they are called Einherjar. He is also called the God of the Hanged, God of the Gods, and God of Burdens, and he gave himself even more names in many different ways, just as he did when he once came to King Gerod:"

> I am called Wanderer, Helper, and Wish,
> Many-Faced, Many-Formed, Filler,
> I am called the Evil-Doer,
> Broad-Hat and Long-Beard,
> Deceiver, Trickster, Revealer.
> Changeable, Bringer of Sorrow,
> Waller, and Keeper,
> Burner, Deceiver, Criminal,
> Eye of Ember, Eye of Radiance,
> Bringer of Sleep, Shaker,
> Lord of the Floods, Protector of Cargo;
>
> I am also called Helmet-Bearer,
> Ruler and Shield of the Army,
> Binder of the Army, Joy of the Army,
> Hearer of Prayers, Caller and Orator and Rider of Battle,
> Sage and Poet and Thinker.
> Zealot in the Council, Owner at home,
> Sorcerer and Graybeard among the Gods,
> I am HIGH and EVENLY HIGH and THIRD,
> Creator and Ferryman of the Dead,

All-Father, Wal-Father,
Return, Guardian, Victory-Father,
God of all gods!

Then Wandermut said: "You have given him a terrifyingly large number of names, and it seems certain to me that one must possess great learning to be able to distinguish and judge here which events gave rise to this or that name."

HIGH replied: "It is certainly a matter of great insight to enumerate all this precisely, yet it may be said briefly that the many and varied languages spoken in the world provided the occasion for most of these names; for all peoples believed they had to adapt his name to their own tongues so that they might invoke and pray to him. His journeys, of which ancient legends tell, may also have provided some occasion for his names, and you will never be called a wise man unless you know how to recount these significant events."

Wandermut asked further: "How, then, are the other Aesir named? And what should one think of them? What great deeds have they accomplished?"

HIGH replied: "Donar is the most excellent of them, who is also called Aesir-Donar or Chariot-Donar. He is the strongest of all gods and men, and his is the realm called the World of Strength. His dwelling is called the Hall of Storms, and this edifice contains five hundred and forty rooms; it is the largest edifice known to men. Thus speaks Wotan himself in Grimm's song:

Five hundred rooms and four times ten, I believe,
is the size of Donar's edifice;
of all the dwellings of the gods,
I know that my son possesses the largest.

"Donar keeps two goats named Cracktooth and Crunchtooth, and a chariot drawn by the goats, which is why he is called Chariot-Donar. Three precious things belong to him: The first is the hammer Malmer, which the ring giants and mountain giants know

well when it flies through the air—and that is hardly surprising; for he has struck down many a head of their fathers and kin. The other precious object is the Belt of Strength; when he girds himself with it, his Aesir strength increases by half. The third treasure, which he values highly and cannot do without on the hammer's shaft, are the iron gloves. No one is wise enough to enumerate all his great deeds, and I myself could recount so many of his adventures that the hours would slip away before I had said all that I know."

Then Wandermut spoke: "I would still like to hear about the other Aesir."

HIGH replied: "Wotan's other son is Balder. Only good things can be said of him. He is the best of them all and is praised by everyone. His face is so beautiful and so radiant that a glow emanates from him; there is only one flower white enough to be compared to Balder's eyelash; it is the whitest of all flowers and is called Balder's Eyelash. From this you may gauge the beauty of both his hair and his form. He is also the wisest of the Aesir, the most eloquent and the most powerful in healing, and it follows from his very nature that no one can evade his judgments. He dwells in the hall Farsight in heaven. Nothing impure can exist in this place, as the song says:

> Balder built the seventh hall with gleaming chambers,
> Far-Sight; no other place, wherever it may lie,
> is as free from wickedness as Balder's.

"The third Aesir is named Nord; he dwells in the heavenly realm called Nauheim. He directs the course of the wind, calms the sea and the fire. One should invoke him during sea voyages and for the hunt. He is so rich and generous that he can grant every land, both stationary and moving, possessions if he so wishes, and one must ask him for them. Nord does not descend from the Aesir; rather, he was born and raised in Wanenheim, and the Vanir once offered him as a hostage to the gods and, in exchange, took as a hostage the Aesir god Henner—that is, the Wise One—meaning

that peace was thus once established between the gods and the Vanir. Nord's wife is named Schade and is the daughter of the giant Dietz. Schade now wished to live where her father had lived, namely on Mount Trummheim, but Nord wanted to be near the lake. They finally agreed that they would each spend nine nights in Trummheim and three in Nauheim. But when Nord returned from the mountains to Nauheim, he said:

> I am weary of the mountains;
> I did not stay there long,
> only nine dark nights;
> Only the howling of the wolves
> sounds more unpleasant
> than the singing of the swans.

"Then Schade replied:

> I could not sleep
> on the shore of the lake
> because of the screeching and cawing;
> early in the morning,
> the seagull—returning from the forest—
> always woke me.

"So Schade returned to the mountains and took up residence in Trummheim; there she travels on snowshoes and hunts game with her bow; that is why she is also called the Goddess or Dise of the Snowshoe. The song says of her:

> The sixth of the seats is Trummheim,
> where Dietz, the giant, the mighty one, dwells;
> There now reigns Schade, the beautiful one,
> Nord's bride, in the ancient stronghold of her father.

"Nord fathered two children in Nauheim; they were beautiful in appearance and stately. One is named Froh, and this son has become one of the most excellent among the gods. He rules over rain and sunshine and over growth on earth, and it is good to invoke him for a bountiful year and for peace, for he grants

prosperity to mankind. Nord's second child is Frauja; she is the most beloved of the Aesir and has her dwelling in the place in heaven called Völkerfeld. When she goes into battle, half of the fallen belong to her and the other half to Wotan, just as it says in the song:

> The ninth is Völkerfeld, where Frauja appoints
> those who shall take their seats there in the hall;
> She chooses the bodies of the dead daily
> chooses them and sends the souls to All-Father.

"Her hall is called Sesselruh and is spacious and bright. When she goes out, she rides in a chariot drawn by two cats. She is fond of all those who call upon her name—for noble women bear the honorary title 'Frauen.' She also loves love songs, and it is good to approach her in matters of love."

Wandermut replied: "Great seems to me the power of the Aesir, and it is no wonder that you possess such great strength, since you have such deep insight into the gods and know how and whom to pray to in each case. Are there any other gods?"

HIGH answered: "There is also the Aesir named Zwyst; he is the boldest and most high-spirited, and with him lies the final judgment on victory in battle; therefore, it is wise for men eager for action to invoke him. It has become a saying to call one 'as bold as Zwyst'—one who surpasses other men and shrinks from no danger. There is a fitting example of his boldness: When the Aesir tricked the World Wolf into letting Schlinger place the shackles on him, he did not want to trust them to release him again until they placed Zwyst's hand in his jaws as a pledge. Since the Aesir did not release him after all, he bit off Zwyst's hand at the spot that has since been called the 'wolf's limb.' As a result, Zwyst became one-handed. He is also considered very wise, so much so that a particularly clever man is said to be 'as wise as Zwyst;' however, it cannot be said of him that he promoted peace among men.

"Another Aesir is Präger, distinguished by knowledge, but

especially by eloquence and verbal skill; he is most skilled in the art of poetry, which is named after him as 'Präger's art,' just as men and women who are more eloquent than others are called 'Präger's disciples' after his name. His wife is Iduna. She keeps in an ash chest those apples that the Aesir are to eat when they grow old, for they become young again from them, and so it will remain until the twilight of the gods."

Then Wandermut spoke: "O Mighty One, I believe the gods have entrusted guardianship and loyalty to Idun."

Then HIGH said, laughing: "It nearly went awry once; I could tell you about it, but first you shall hear of the other Aesir. One is named Weltwart, who is also called the Wise Aesir. He is great and holy and was born of nine mothers, who were also sisters. He is also called the Golden-Toothed One, for his teeth are all gold. His stallion is named Goldmane. World-Guardian dwells on the heavenly bank by the bridge Beberast. He is the guardian of the gods and dwells there at the edge of the heavens to protect the bridge from the mountain giants. He needs less sleep than a bird and sees a hundred leagues; he also hears the grass growing on the earth and the wool on the sheep, and thus everything that moves with a sound. He possesses the horn called the Gellerhorn, and when he blows into it, it is heard in all worlds; his sword is called Manneshaupt, which means 'human wisdom.' Many songs tell of him; thus it is said in the Song of the Bur of the Aesir:

> The eighth is the heavenly seat of the World-Guardian,
> the Guardian and Keeper of the Bridge;
> There the Guardian of Heaven comfortably indulges
> in the exquisite drink of the Mead.

"He himself sings in the Song of the World-Guardian:

> I was born of nine mothers,
> nine sisters I lay in their wombs.

"Another of the Aesir is named Hader. He is blind, but extraordinarily strong. Yet gods and men would wish they did not

have to mention him, for the work of his hands will linger all too long in the memory of gods and men.

"Widar is the name of the Aesir whom they call the Silent One. He wears the sturdy shoe, of whom more will be said. He is the strongest after Donar, and the gods place great trust in him in all times of need.

"Wali, or Walter, is the name of a son of Wotan and Rinda; he is brave in battle and a very skilled archer.

"Wüller is the name of a son of Sippia, Donar's stepson; he is such a skilled archer and so agile on snowshoes, that no one can measure up to him; he is also handsome in appearance and possesses all the skills of a warrior; therefore, it is advisable to call upon him in single combat. Vorsasse is the name of a son of Balder and Nanna, the daughter of Neff. He dwells in heaven in the hall called Gleißner, and all who go to him with legal disputes return reconciled; there is the best place of judgment for gods and men. So it is said in the Song of the Heavenly Halls:

> Gleißner, the tenth hall;
> its pillars are of gold,
> and the roof over the hall is of silver;
> Vorsasse sits enthroned there day after day,
> striving to settle all disputes.

"Among the Aesir is also counted the one whom many call the bringer of strife and the stirrer of quarrels among the Aesir, the originator of all deceitful words, and the disgrace of all gods and men. His name is Luge, Locker, Lotter, or Lüster; he is the son of the giant Verbieter or Schlagwetter; his mother is named Labe or Nahei; his two brothers are Löser and Helblind. Luge is pleasing and handsome in appearance, but evil in disposition and of a highly changeable nature; he surpasses others in cunning and deception in all things. He often put the Aesir in deep predicaments, yet he also helped them out again through his cunning counsel. His wife is Sigun; their son is Narr; but he also

has other children with Kümmernis, a woman from the land of the giants; one of these children is the World Wolf, another is the Midgard Serpent, and the third is Hel.

"But when the gods learned that these three were being raised in Jotenheim, and the gods divined through clairvoyance that they had great calamity to expect from the siblings and evil to fear from both their mother's and their father's nature, Allfather sent the gods out to seize the children and bring them to him. Then he cast the serpent into the deep sea that surrounds all the land, but the worm grew so large that it now lies in the middle of the sea, encircling all the lands and biting its own tail.

"He threw Hel down to Mistland and gave her dominion over the nine other worlds, so that she might provide shelter only to those sent to her: these were all who had died of infirmity or old age. Hel has a great dwelling there, and the walls are astonishingly high and fitted with tall and strong bars. Her hall is called Misery, Hunger her bowls, Wasting her knife, Limpfoot the servant and Dragfoot the maid, Falling Calamity the gate, Endurance-Bearer the threshold that leads in, Infirmity the bed, Pale Fear the sheet. Hel is half black and half flesh-colored, making her easily recognizable by her rather repulsive and grim appearance.

"Finally, the Aesir took the World Wolf in, and Zwyst alone had the courage to feed him daily. The gods saw how he grew mightier day by day, and all signs indicated that he seemed destined only to bring them harm. So they deemed it wise to fashion an exceedingly strong chain, which they called Leidig. They showed it to the wolf and challenged him to test his strength against it. The wolf did not think they were too strong, and he let them do with them as they wished. No sooner had the wolf stretched himself than the shackle snapped, and he was freed from Leidig. Afterward, the Aesir wove a new shackle, one and a half times stronger than the old one, and named it Lähmer; they challenged the wolf a second time to test himself and said, he would become very famous for his strength if such a sturdy binding

could not hold him. The wolf reasoned that this binding would be stronger, but that his strength had also grown in the meantime, ever since he had broken the last one. At the same time, it occurred to him that he would have to take some risk if he wanted to become famous, and so he allowed them to fasten the binding. When the Aesir declared they were finished, the wolf shook himself, threw himself to the ground, braced against the shackles, and strained so hard that the shackles soon snapped and the pieces flew far and wide. Thus he freed himself from Lähmer! Ever since then, the proverb "to free oneself from Leidig and tear oneself away from Lähmer" has been used whenever someone carries out a task with great vigor.

"Now the Äsen feared they would never be able to bind the wolf again. Therefore, Allfather Schirner sent his messenger, Frohs, down to Schwarzalbenheim to some skilled dwarves and had them weave the shackle, which is called the Schlinger. Schlinger was composed of six things: the sound of a cat's footsteps and women's beards, the roots of the mountains and the tendons of bears, the breath of fish and the saliva of birds.

"If, Wandermut, these peculiarities were previously unknown to you, common sense alone should suffice to convince you that we are not lying to you. Surely you have seen that women have no beards, that cats make no sound when they run, and that mountains have no roots at their base—and so you will surely believe me when I assert that everything else I told you is equally true, even if you had no proof of one thing or another."

Wandermut replied: "Certainly, one can distinguish what is true. I can see it precisely in these things you cite as examples. But what did the shackle look like on the outside?"

HIGH replied: "I can tell you exactly. The shackle was soft and smooth as a silk ribbon, yet as reliable and durable as you are about to hear. The rope was brought to the Aesir, and they thanked the messenger profusely for his laborious efforts. Then they crossed the lake called Blackwater to the Heath Island and called out to the

wolf. They showed him the silk ribbon and again urged him to try it. They told him it was probably a bit more reliable than its outward appearance suggested. One passed it to the other, and each tested the strength of his limbs on it; yet it did not break, though they thought the wolf would surely tear it apart.

"He replied: 'It seems to me that with this little ribbon, I would gain little glory if I were to snap such a brittle thing in two; but if it comes down to cunning and deceit—even though it seems quite weak—then the bond will not touch my body.'

"The gods countered that it must be easy for him to tear such a flimsy thing apart, since he had already broken the strong iron shackles: 'If you still fail, then the gods have nothing to fear from you, and we will set you free again.'

"But the wolf said: 'If you bind me so that I can no longer free myself, then you are mocking me, and it would be too late for me to wait for your help. I am not at all eager to have these bonds placed upon me, but before you deny me the courage, let one of you place his hand in my mouth as a pledge that this will be done without deceit.'

"Then one Ase looked at the other, and it seemed to them that there were now two dangers, and none wanted to offer his hand—until Zwyst held out his right hand and placed it in the wolf's mouth. Then the Ase took the end of the rope and wrapped it around a huge boulder called Geller, driving the rock deep into the earth. Then they took the rock called Trotzdem as their second stone. They drove that one even deeper into the ground and used it as an abutment. But as soon as the Ase realized that the wolf was completely bound this time—that the more he strained against the chain, the harder it grew, and the more violently he tugged at it, the more sharply it tightened—they all laughed except Zwyst; for he had lost his hand. Now the wolf opened his mouth wide, snapping wildly and trying to bite, but the Aesir thrust a sword into his throat, with the hilt against his lower jaw and the tip against his palate, thus locking his mouth shut. Ever since then he

has been whining terribly, and the drool running from his mouth becomes a river called Delusion. There he now lies until the downfall of the gods."

Then Wandermut spoke: "Luge has conceived nothing but a wretched brood: these siblings are indeed dreadful as a whole, no less so than each one on their own. Why did the Aesir not slay the wolf at once, since they expected such evil from him?"

HIGH replied: "The gods held their sanctuaries and places of peace in such high esteem. They did not wish to defile them with the wolf's blood, even though their prophecies foretold that he would become Wotan's murderer."

Wandermut then asked further: "I have heard many things about the Asen; now I would like to hear about the Asinn."

HIGH replied: "Fricka is the most noble; to her the sanctuary is dedicated to her, which is called the Hall of Love and is exceedingly magnificent. The next Aesir woman is Saga; she dwells in Sturzbach. That, too, is a beautiful and grand hall. The third is Heila, the healer among the Aesir. The fourth is Gabe; she is a maiden, and those who die as maidens serve her. The fifth is Fülle; she, too, is a maiden and wears her hair loose with a golden band around her head. She guards Fricka's jewelry and chest, tends to her beauty, and knows all her secrets. Frauja is the most esteemed after Fricka and is married to the man named Od. Their daughter is named Kleinod; she is so beautiful that everything that is beautiful and precious is named after her. Od set out on long journeys, and Frauja weeps for him, and her tears are red gold. Frauja bears many other names, for she gave herself various names as she traveled among unknown peoples, in search of Od. Thus she is also called Sea-Born, Creator, Giver, Adornment, and is also known as the Goddess of Delusion. She possesses the starry necklace crafted by the Brisingen dwarves.

"Minna, the seventh, strives earnestly to kindle the hearts of humans—men and women alike—with love. Loba, the eighth, is

so gentle and calls out that she has permission from Allfather and Fricka to bring together people—men and women—who until then had felt estranged and at odds with one another. The betrothal is named after her, and so it is that she is highly praised by most people.

"The ninth is Wahre; she hears the oaths and vows that men and women make to one another, which is why binding agreements are also called "truth-oaths." She punishes all who break them. Truth is wise and inquisitive, so that nothing remains hidden from her; hence the saying that a woman "becomes aware" of something when she becomes certain of a matter. Verwahr is the tenth; she guards the doors of the hall of the gods and bars those who are not to enter. She is also appointed to protect those at court proceedings who wish to refute false testimony, hence the saying: 'Verwahrung is invoked' when a man denies an accusation.

"Lehna, the twelfth, is destined to protect people, whom Fricka wishes to keep safe from danger. Hence the saying: "He who protects himself leans on her."

"Measure is the thirteenth; she is experienced and possesses a wise, noble composure. All truly wise men and women of moderation and noble conduct are named after her.

"High-Rider, the fourteenth, Fricka sends on missions to the various worlds. She possesses a chariot that travels through the air and over water and is called Hufwerfer. It once happened that a Wane saw her riding through the air and cried out:

'What is flying there, what is traveling there, what is running through the air?She replied:"I do not fly, I do not ride, yet I steer through the air on Hufwerfer's back, the Hudelfell stallion sired by Zaunbrechrin.'

"Those who live arrogantly, carefree, and freely are named after Hochfahre.

"Erda, the mother of Donar, and Rinda, the mother of Walter,

are also among the Aesir women. There are still other women who serve in Valhalla, pour out drinks, and keep the tableware, the ale bowls, and the cups, as it is said in the song of Grimm and Gerod:

> May mist and storm carry the drinking horn to me—
> Swift-Vengeance, High-Rage,
> Sprout-of-Strength, and Battle;
> Spear-Intoxicated, Ready-to-Leap,
> Terror-of-Armies, and Bane-of-Armies;
> Axe-Time and the Burner—bring us the beer!

"These are the Valkyries. Wotan sends them into every battle; they choose the warriors who are to fall and determine the outcome of victory."

Then Wandermut spoke: "You said earlier that all the men who have fallen in battle since the beginning of the world have come to Wotan in Valhalla. Does he have enough food to feed them all? It seems to me that must be an enormous crowd."

Then HIGH replied: "What you say is true. A vast crowd is there, and there must be many more men yet to come, and yet it will seem small to you, when the World Wolf one day comes rampaging. Nevertheless, the number of men in Valhalla will never grow so great that the flesh of the boar—whom they call Soot-Black—will not suffice. He is roasted and eaten daily, yet by evening he is whole again. As for the question you were presumably about to ask, it seems to me that only a few will be knowledgeable enough to give you the right answer. But listen to what the song says."

> Soot-Face the cook lets the spicy bacon
> from the coal-black wild boar
> simmer in the soot-black cauldron.
> Yet few know what the Einherjar actually eat.

Wandermut asked: "Does Wotan eat the same food as his Einherjar?" HIGH replied: "The food that is served at the table, he gives to his two wolves, Gehrlich and Gierig. He needs no

sustenance; spirit is both food and drink to him:"

> Gierig and Gehrlich—the wolves—
> Wotan, Father of Victory, feeds himself;
> All-Father, Father of the World,
> Wotan lives forever and on wine alone.

"Two ravens sit on his shoulders and whisper into his ear all the news they see and hear. Their names are Gedank and Gedenk. He sends them out at dawn to fly to all the worlds, and around noon they return; thus he becomes aware of all things. That is why people call him the Raven God:"

> Gedank and Gedenk fly over the fields
> of the Midgard of men every day;
> Gedank, I fear, will one day not fly back,
> and I fear for Gedenk even more.

Wandermut asked: "What do the warriors drink, for their drink must surely be as rich as their food? Or do they drink water there?"

HIGH replied: "How strange your question is! As if Allfather were to summon kings and princes to his presence and give them only water to drink. Then it would surely be the case that many who came to Valhalla who might think he had paid dearly for such water, had he received nothing better upon his arrival after enduring wounds and mortal pain. But I can tell you something comforting: The goat named Heidrun stands above Valhalla and nibbles the shoots from the branches of the tree whose far-famed name is Laurat. From her teats flows milk, and with it she fills a sheepskin every day—one large enough to provide all the Einherjar with their fill."

Then Wandermut proclaimed: "This goat is of extraordinary use, and the tree from which she grazes must be a rare and wondrous one."

HIGH replied: "Even more remarkable is the stag Eichkrone, who likewise stands above Valhalla and feeds on the branches of

the World Tree; for so much moisture trickles from his antlers that it fills the Spring Source, from which all the waters then flow—those called: Deep, Broad, Bold, Defiant, Long-Running, Murmuring, Rushing, Swift, Chatty, Bubbling, Yawning, Raging, Lovely, Talkative, Stony, Greedy, Useful, Necessary, Fleeing, Slippery, Impetuous, Swallowing, Drying Up, Burning, Roaring, Winding, Stranded, Glittering, Shimmering."

Wandermut said: "These are wondrous things you tell me. Valhalla must be a mighty great house, but it will often be very crowded at the doors."

HIGH replied: "Why did you not ask me beforehand how many doors lead into Valhalla and what they are like? Now that you have heard this, you yourself will have to admit that it would be strange indeed if not everyone could enter and leave Valhalla as they please. It is also the plain truth that it is no more difficult to to find a seat inside than to get in, as it says in the song of Grimm and Gerod:"

> Five hundred gates and four times ten
> I know there are in vast Valhalla,
> From each, eight hundred warriors once set out
> to fight the World-Wolf Fenrir.

Wandermut said: "There is an immense host of warriors in Valhalla, and that compels me to believe that Wotan, who commands such a vast army, must also be an almighty ruler. What, then, do the warriors do for amusement when they are not drinking?"

HIGH replied: "Every day, once they have dressed, they take up their weapons, go into the gardens, and fight, each slaying the other; that is their game. And when it is time for the evening meal, they ride home to Valhalla and sit down to the drinking feast, as has been said:

All the Aesir in Wotan's domain
meet daily for battle;
They slay one another and then ride home
and sit together, reconciled.

"And true is what you said. Wotan is mighty, and most judgments confirm this. Thus it is said in the Aesir's own words:"

The greatest is World-Ash among the trees,
The fairest is Sun-Sail among the ships,
The first is Wotan among the Aesir,
The swiftest is Whirlwind among the steeds,
The best is Beberast among the bridges,
Präger the best poet, Garrn the best mastiff,
And High-Foot the best raven.

Wandermut asked: "To whom does the horse Sausewind belong, and what else is there to say about him?"

HIGH replied: "You cannot judge Sausewind unless you know the reason for which he was sired, and that, it seems to me, is worth the following tale. — It was early on, soon after the founding of the gods, when they had created Mitgard and built Valhalla, that a master craftsman came and offered to build a fortress in three half-years, and so secure that they might be safe from mountain and ice giants, even if should ever manage to enter Mitgard. But as payment, he demanded Frauja, along with the Sun and the Moon. So the Aesir went to discuss the matter and held a council.

"The deal was finally struck with the master builder. He was to receive he claimed if he built the castle in one winter. But if, on the first day of summer, any part of the castle remained unfinished, he would receive no reward; nor was he to accept help from anyone. When they informed him of this decision, he asked them only to allow him to make use of his stallion Pechgang. Luge alone advised that they should grant him this request.

"On the first day of winter, the master builder began construction of the castle and hauled the stones there at night with

the stallion. The Äsen considered it a great miracle to see the enormous loads the stallion brought; the horse did half as much work as the master builder himself. The agreement, however, had been made before many witnesses and confirmed by oaths. Nevertheless, the giant—for such was the master builder—believed he would not have been sufficiently secure and protected among the Aesir had Donar returned in the meantime, for Donar was then on a journey eastward to slay giants.

"As winter drew to a close, the construction of the castle had progressed so far and was so high and so strong that nothing could compare to it; and when finally only three days remained until summer and only the castle gate was left to complete, the gods took their seats on their judgment thrones and held council. One asked the other who had advised let Frauja go to Jotenheim and thereby corrupt the air and the heavens by tearing down the sun and moon and giving them to the Jötnar. They all agreed that the one who had advised this was the one who advised the most evils—Luge, the son of Lausa— and they threatened him that he would die a wretched death unless he could devise a way to deprive the master builder of his payment, and they pressed him hard. Then Luge grew afraid, and he swore an oath to them that he would see to it that the master builder would be deprived of his wages, whatever the cost.

"It was that very evening that the giant was riding out with his stallion Pechgang to fetch stones, when a mare ran out of the forest toward the stallion and neighed at him. As soon as the stallion realized what kind of horse was approaching, he reared , snapped the reins in two, and ran after the mare, and the mare led him toward the forest, with the master builder chasing after them both to catch the stallion. The horses now ran back and forth all night long, so that work came to a standstill that night, and even the next day, work did not proceed as it otherwise would have. The master now feared that the project might never be completed and flew into a giant's rage. Only then the Aesir truly realized that a

mountain giant had come to them and called out to Donar. He arrived at once, and in the very next moment, Malmer's hammer already flew through the air. With that, he paid the master builder his due—not with the sun and moon, but rather by forbidding him from ever building in Jotenheim again; for with his very first blow against the giant, he shattered the giant's skull into small pieces and sent him down to Nebelhel. Luge, however—as a mare—had endured such a harrowing ride with the stallion Pechgang that she gave birth a short time later to a foal that was gray in appearance and had eight legs, and this became Sausewind, the finest of horses among gods and men. Thus the song goes:"

> Then the eternal Aesir, the Most Holy Gods,
> hurried to the Hall of Judgment and held counsel,
> to determine who had treacherously grieved the heavens
> and betrayed Fruja to the giant in exchange for a price.
> Then the oaths, the words, and the vows wavered,
> as did the firm covenants that had been made before;
> And Donar pressed eagerly for action.
> He rarely hesitates when he sees something shameful.

Wandermut asked further: "I have heard the ship Sun-Sail spoken of as the best of all ships; is there none as good?"

HIGH replied: "Sun-Sail is the best of all ships and the most skillfully crafted, but the ship of the dead, Nagelfahr, which once comes from the south, is the largest. Certain dwarves, the sons of Iwalt, built Sun-Sail and named the ship Joy; it is large enough to take on all the Aesir with their weapons and military equipment, and it catches the wind as soon as it hoists its sails, no matter where the journey may lead. But if it is not to set sail, it is made up of so many individual parts and assembled with such great artistry that it can be folded and stored in a bag like a cloth."

Wandermut said: "Without a doubt, the 'Sun Sail' is an excellent ship, and there must have been some most wondrous magic at work for it to be constructed in this way. Has Donar never, anywhere or at any time, encountered anything so mighty

and powerful that it would have been his superior in strength or intellect?"

HIGH replied: "Few, I imagine, can say anything about this, but there must have been many a time when he faced a tough challenge.

"And if it were indeed the case that some resistance was so strong and monstrous that Donar could not prevail over it, one should not speak of it; for there are enough facts that prove Donar remains the most powerful of all."

Then Wandermut said: "It seems to me, then, that I have asked about things that no one here is able to answer."

But EVENLY HIGH replied: "We have heard of Donar's adventures, which seemed too incredible to be true, but there is One here above me who can provide the true account of them, and you may believe that he who has never lied before will not lie for the first time today."

Wandermut spoke: "Here I stand, listening to receive an answer to my question; for otherwise, I declare you defeated if you cannot answer what I ask." To this, THIRD replied: "It is easy to guess that you, Wandermut, wish to know those events, although it seems to us that it would be improper to recount them.

"This, then, is the beginning of his story: that Donar once set out with goats and a cart, and Luge went with him. Toward evening, they came to a farmstead and found lodging there for the night. For supper, Donar took his two goats and slaughtered them. Their hides were stripped and laid out by the cauldrons. When the meat was cooked, Donar sat down with his companion for the evening meal and also invited the farmer, his wife, and his two children to dine with him. The son's name was Blitz and the daughter's was Raschel. Donar then moved the hides away from the fire and toward himself and asked the farmer and his household to throw the bones, intact, onto the goat hides. But Blitz, the farmer's son, had the femur of one of the goats and split it open

with his knife to reach the marrow.

"Donar stayed the night. He rose before dawn, dressed, took the hammer Malmer, raised it high, and consecrated the goatskins. Then the goats stood up unharmed, but one of them was lame in its hind leg. Donar felt it and determined the farmer and his household must have handled the goat's bones rather carelessly; he could tell that one femur was broken.

"There is no need to go into great detail—everyone will understand—just how startled the farmer was when he saw Donar draw his eyebrows forward over his eyes, and though the farmer could barely see anything with his own eyes, he still thought he was about to be struck down by his own lightning. As he did so, Donar gripped the hammer's shaft so tightly that his knuckles turned white. The farmer, as was to be expected, cowered, and his family cried out in horror, begging for mercy and offering everything they owned as compensation. When the Ase saw their terror, his anger subsided; he calmed himself and, as a compromise, took the two children, Blitz and Raschel, with him. He made them his servants, and they have faithfully followed him ever since. Donar left the goats with the farmer and began his journey eastward to Jotenheim, all the way to the sea; he then crossed the deep sea, and when he came ashore again, he walked up the beach, accompanied by Luge, Blitz, and Raschel. After a short while of walking, a large forest loomed before them, and they continued on through it until darkness fell. Blitz had the smelliest feet of all the men and carried Donar's knapsack; for there was nothing to eat in this region. Only when darkness fell did they seek a place to spend the night and found a fairly large house. The entrance was on one of the narrow sides and was as wide and high as the entire house. They chose this as their place to rest for the night.

"At midnight, a violent earthquake struck; the ground began to shake beneath them, and the house swayed. Donar leaped to his feet and called out to his companions, and as they groped around in the darkness, they came upon an annex roughly in the middle

of the house on the right-hand side; they fled into it, filled with fear. Donar, however, sat down in front of the entrance, grasped his hammer, and resolved to defend himself. All night long they heard a tremendous snorting and roaring. At daybreak, Donar stepped outside and saw a man lying right in front of him in the forest, who was certainly not small; he was sleeping and snoring quite loudly. Then Donar thought he knew what the noise during the night had been all about. He fastened his belt of strength, and the power of the Aesir grew within him. At that moment, the man awoke and quickly stood up. And here it is said that Donar was for a while too timid to strike him with his hammer, and merely asked him his name.

"He called himself Schreier. 'But I,' he continued, 'need not ask your name; I can tell you're Donar of the Aesir—but where did you drag my glove off to?' He bent down and picked up his glove.

"Donar now realized that the glove was the house they'd used as a shelter that night, and the extension was the thumb of the glove. Schreier asked if Donar wanted him as a traveling companion, and Donar agreed. Schreier then pulled out his knapsack, untied it, and began to eat his breakfast; Donar and his companions did the same. Schreier suggested they pool their food supplies, and Donar agreed. Schreier tied all the food into a bundle, hoisted it onto his back, and made tremendous progress throughout the day.

"Toward evening, he chose a place for them to spend the night under a large oak tree. Then he said to Donar that he wanted to lie down and sleep: 'Here, take the food sack and prepare yourselves a late-night meal.' Immediately afterward, he fell asleep and snored loudly.

"Donar took the food sack and tried to untie it, and it must be said—as unbelievable as it may seem to you—that he could not loosen the knot, and not even the end of a strap would budge. The bundle remained tied as it was. When he realized that all his efforts were in vain, he grew angry, seized the hammer Malmer with both

hands, placed his foot on Schreier as he lay there, and struck him on the head. Schreier awoke and asked if a leaf had fallen on his head, and also whether they had now eaten and were ready to lie down to rest.

"Donar replied that they were just about to sleep, and went off with his companions to rest under an ash tree; but to tell the truth, none of them was fearless enough to actually fall asleep.

"Around midnight, Donar heard Schreier snoring so loudly that the forest echoed. So he stood up, walked over to him, swung his hammer fiercely and wildly, and struck the giant right in the crown of his head, so that he felt the hammerhead sink deep into his skull. Schreier woke up instantly, but he only asked, 'What's that? Did an acorn fall on my head? And what about you, Donar?' Donar quickly jumped back and replied that he had just woken up, that it was midnight, so there was still plenty of time to sleep.

"Donar thought to himself: if he were to get the chance to land a third blow on him, Schreier would never see him again. He lay back down and listened. Shortly before daybreak, he realized that Schreier was fast asleep. He rose, leaped toward him, swung the hammer with all his might, and struck the giant on the temple that was facing upward, so that the hammer sank in up to the shaft.

"Schreier then simply sat up, rubbed his cheek, and said, 'Are there birds up in the tree? When I woke up, it felt as though some debris from the branches had struck my head. Are you awake, Donar?—It's time to get up and get dressed. You don't have far to go now to the castle called Niegart. I heard you discussing among yourselves that I'm not a small man, but you'll see even bigger men when you get to Niegart. I just want to give you some sound advice: don't act too grand there, because Niegart-Luge's household hardly tolerates such infants such as yourselves. Otherwise, you'd better turn back right away; such a decision will likely be best for you. But if you're inclined to continue on, head east. My path now leads north toward those cliffs you see over there.' With that, he took his travel sack, slung it over his back,

and cut across into the forest ahead of them. However, there is no way of knowing whether the Aesir had asked to see him return safely.

"Donar and his companions now continued on their way, and they walked on until noon, when they suddenly saw a castle standing in the field. They had to crane their necks far back until they managed to look all the way up at it. They went closer. The gate was locked with a grille. Donar set about opening it, but he could not. After they had tried every conceivable means, they finally squeezed through the bars of the grille and came before a large hall. The door stood open, and they went inside: There they saw many men seated on both rows of benches, most of them quite tall. They immediately stepped before Niegart-Luge and greeted him.

"He glanced at them reluctantly, bared his teeth in a grin, and said: 'News from distant lands is often far-fetched and rarely true, or am I mistaken when I hear that this little stub is Wagen-Donar? Perhaps you are more than you appear to be. Therefore, first demonstrate the skills that you, as traveling companions, believe yourselves to be proficient in, for no one may be here with us who is not skilled or has knowledge that surpasses that of other men.'

"Then Luge, who was standing all the way in the back, called out: 'There is one skill I master, and I am ready to demonstrate it. There is no one here who can eat his meal faster than I!'

"Niegart-Luge said: 'That's quite a feat if you can pull it off! Let's try it right away.'

"He called a man named Lohe from the farthest benches to come before his chair to compete with Luge. Then they brought in a trough filled with meat and set it on the floor of the hall. Luge sat at one end of the trough, Lohe at the other, and both began to eat as eagerly as they could until they met in the middle of the trough. By then, Luge had gnawed all the meat off the bones and eaten it, but Lohe had consumed everything—meat and bones,

along with the trough itself. It now seemed to everyone that Luge had lost the contest.

"Thereupon Niegart-Luge asked what kind of contest that young man was skilled at. Blitz replied that he would like to try racing against anyone else whom Niegart-Luge might set against him.

"Niegart-Luge said that this was a commendable skill and expressed great expectations. Blitz must surely be exceptionally quick if he wanted to win at this art. The attempt should be made immediately.

"He stood up and went out in front of the hall, where a good running track stretched across a level field. Then he called over a young lad whom he named Hugo and ordered him to race against Blitz.

"In the first race, Hugo was so far ahead that, upon reaching the end of the track, he turned around and ran a good distance back toward Blitz.

"Niegart-Luge said: 'You must lean forward even more, Blitz, if you want to win this race, and yet it is true that none of the men who have been our guests here has proven to be faster on foot.'

"When Hugo reached the end of the track on the second run and turned around, Blitz was still a good arrow's shot away.

"Niegart-Luge said, 'Blitz is running well, but I don't think he'll win this bet. We'll see when they run the third race.'

"On this final run, Hugo crossed the finish line first again and looked back.

"Blitz hadn't quite reached the middle of the track yet. Everyone thought this bet was decided as well.

"Now Niegart-Luge asked Donar in which skill he himself to demonstrate before them: 'Since people have made such a big fuss about your great deeds.'

"Donar replied that he would most like to test himself in drinking, against whomever it might be.

"Niegart-Luge declared that this could be arranged. He went into the hall, summoned his cupbearer, and ordered him to fetch the punishment horn, from which his followers often used to drink. Immediately, the cupbearer brought the horn and placed it in Donar's hand. As he did so, Niegart-Luge remarked: 'We think it fitting to drink from this horn if it is emptied in a single gulp; some empty it on the second gulp, but there is no one here who drinks so sparingly that he could not empty it on the third gulp.'

"Donar looked at the horn, and it did not seem large to him, though it was quite long; but he was also very thirsty and began to drink at once. He took a mighty swig and did not think it would be necessary to set the horn down more often. But when he finally ran out of breath, he set it down and checked to see what remained of the contents. And it seemed to him to be such a meager amount that the horn was now emptier than before.

"Niegart-Luge, however, said: 'A good drink! Even if not exactly a large one. I wouldn't have believed it if I'd been told that Asen-Donar couldn't take longer sips, yet I know you'll force it on the second sip.'

"Donar said nothing. He put the horn to his mouth and intended this time to take a longer sip; he intended to drink as long as his breath held out, but noticed that the tip of the horn wouldn't rise as high as he would have liked, and when he finally had to take the horn from his mouth, it seemed to him that he had drunk even less than on the first sip. Yet the rim no longer overflowed as he carried it.

"Niegart-Luge grinned: 'What's the matter with you, Donar? Are you still holding back from taking one more drink than might be good for you? It seems to me that if you now want to empty the horn with a third gulp, this gulp must surely be considered the largest. But you won't be able to be called a great man among us

—as the Aesir praise you—unless you prove yourself in other arts beyond what you seem capable of in drinking.'

"Then Donar grew angry, put the horn to his mouth once more, and drew with all his might. He tried his very best to drink as much as possible! But when he looked into the horn, it had only become a little emptier. So he handed the horn back and refused to drink any more. Niegart-Luge said: 'It is now clear that your strength is not as great as we thought; it is evident that you succeed in nothing in these matters. Or would you perhaps like to try your hand at other games?' Donar replied: 'Yes, I will try my hand at other games. It would seem strange to me if I were back home among the Aesir and such drinks were considered trivial. — What task do you now wish to set for me?'

"Niegart-Luge said: 'Here, young lads manage what seems to be a trivial task—lifting my cat off the ground—and I would not dare to demand such a thing of Aesir-Donar if I had not seen that you are capable of even less than I thought.'

"Then a gray cat—quite large—was already running across the hall's floor. Donar went over, grasped it with one hand right under its belly, and lifted it up. But the cat arched its back the more Donar lifted it, and only when Donar stretched his arm as high as he possibly could did the cat lift one paw off the ground. Donar got no further in this game.

"Niegart-Luge simply said: 'This game went just as I expected. The cat is quite large, and Donar is small and short compared to the tall men here among us.'

"Donar replied: 'No matter how small you call me, let whoever wants to come here and wrestle with me, for now I am angry!'

"Niegart-Luge scanned the benches and said: 'I see no man here in the hall for whom wrestling with you would not be child's play. Let's see,' he added, 'call the old woman here—my nurse Elli! Let Donar wrestle with her if he wishes: she has already given birth to men who did not seem any weaker to me than Donar.'

"Then he told the old woman, who had just entered the hall, to engage Donar in a wrestling match. There's no need for long speeches: The fight began with Donar throwing himself into the struggle with ever-greater ferocity, yet the old woman stood her ground all the more firmly. Soon, however, the woman resorted to tricks, and Donar's foot came off the ground—that was a dangerous move! And not long after that, Donar fell to the knee of one leg.

"At that moment, Niegart-Luge stepped in, ordered them to stop fighting, and said: 'Donar had no need to challenge other men to a wrestling match at his court.'

"Meanwhile, evening had fallen, and Niegart-Luge showed Donar and his companions to their seats. There they spent the night, well received.

"The next morning, as day broke, Donar rose with his companions, dressed, and prepared to depart. Niegart-Luge came and had a table set before them. There was no shortage of good hospitality, both in drink and in food. But once they had eaten, they hurried on their way. Niegart-Luge followed them out to the castle gates, and as they parted, he asked Donar how he thought his journey had turned out and whether he had finally encountered a man more powerful than himself. Donar replied that he could not deny that the encounter had been a great disgrace to him: 'I know full well that you will call me an insignificant man, which I take great offense at.'

"Niegart-Luge replied: 'Now you shall hear the truth, since you are happily back outside the castle, into which—as long as I live and have a say in the matter—you shall never set foot a second time; and this much I know for certain: you would never have entered it at all had I foreseen beforehand the immense power within you, with which you nearly put us in a very awkward position. But I have deceived you with nothing but an illusion. — First of all, it was I myself who encountered you in the forest. When you were about to open the food, I had tied it with iron

bands, and you couldn't find the spot where it was to be untied. Then you struck me three times with the hammer. The first was the weakest, and yet it was so strong that it would have ended in my death had it struck its mark. You saw that large rock just before the castle, didn't you, and you also saw three square indentations at the top, one of which was the deepest—those were the marks of your hammer blows, and I held the rock up to block your blows, but you didn't see it.

"'It was the same with the contests in which you tested yourself against my courtiers. First there was what Luge accomplished. He was very hungry and ate with extraordinary appetite, but the one named Lohe was the wildfire and devoured the meat along with the trough. And when Blitz raced against Hugo, that was my idea —for Hugo means "thought"—and it was not to be expected of Blitz that he could match him in speed. But when you drank from the horn, and it seemed to be slowly emptying—I cannot believe that—then truly a miracle that I would not have thought possible: for the other end of the horn lay out in the sea. You could not see that. But when you come to the sea again, you will realize how much of the sea you have drunk away. That will now be called low tide.

"'Even more worthy of praise, it seems to me, is that you picked up the cat from the ground. Then all who saw you lift one of its feet off the ground were afraid, for this cat was not what it seemed to you—it was the World Serpent that encircles all lands, and it was barely long enough for its tail and head to still touch the earth. You lifted it so high that only a little was missing to reach the sky. But the greatest miracle was the wrestling match: you held out for so long and finally fell only to one knee, even though you were wrestling with Old Age—for Elli is Old Age. Before this, no one had ever been created, and no one ever will be—no matter how old they might grow—who, when challenged to a wrestling match by Old Age, would not be brought down by it. Well, to tell the whole truth in the end, since we must part ways after all: it will be best

for both of us if you do not come to visit us more often; next time, I would in any case fortify my castle with such illusions and other deceptions that you would have no power over me.'

"When Donar heard these words, he reached for his hammer and swung it wide through the air. But just as he was about to strike, he saw no Niegart-Luge anymore; and when he turned back toward the castle, intending to smash it to pieces, he saw vast, beautiful fields, but no castle. So Donar turned and went on his way, until he reached Treuwang, his hall, once more. And it is no lie that on the way he pondered how he might bring about an encounter with the Mitgart Serpent, which has since come to pass. I believe no one else would know more to report about Donar's journey."

Then Wandermut spoke: "Niegart-Luge must surely be overwhelmingly powerful and capable of much through illusions and sorcery—so much so that he is all the more powerful the more courtiers he has who, like him, possess great power. How, then, did Donar avenge this failure?"

HIGH replied: "Even to one who is not a sage himself, it is no secret that Donar rectified this failed journey, which has just been recounted. He did not stay at home long, but set out on this journey so hastily that he departed without a chariot, oxen, or traveling companions. As a young lad, he journeyed on beyond Mitgart and one evening came upon a giant named Hummer. Donar stayed with him and took lodging for the night. When day broke, Hummer got up and dressed, ready to row out to sea to fish. Donar also jumped up, was soon ready, and asked Hummer to let him row out to sea with him. Hummer said he would be of little help to him, because he was so small and boyish; 'and you'll get cold if I row far out and stay out on the sea, as I'm accustomed to doing.'

"Donar replied that he might row as far from land as he pleased, and that it was uncertain which of the two would be the first to ask to row back home.

"Donar was so enraged by the giant that he was on the verge of letting his hammer thunder forth at once, but he refrained because he intended to test his strength in a better place. He asked Hummer what bait they had, but Hummer told him to find some for himself.

"Donar then turned and walked a short distance upstream, where he came upon a herd of oxen belonging to Hummer; he caught the largest ox from the herd, named "Sky-Puncher," wrenched its head from its neck, and carried it down to the sea. Hummer had meanwhile pushed the boat into the water, and Donar boarded it. He sat in the stern, took two oars in hand, and began rowing so vigorously that it seemed to Hummer he was enjoying a brisk ride from his rowing.

"Hummer himself sat in the bow of the boat and did his best to imitate him.

"After a while, Hummer said they had now reached the fishing ground where he usually stopped to catch flounder, but Donar declared he wanted to row further out. So they rowed on diligently. After another while, Hummer thought they had now gone so far out that it would be dangerous to remain so close to the snake. But Donar declared that he wanted to row a little farther, and so he did, much to Hummer's displeasure. Finally, the Aesir pulled in the oars and produced a fishing line that was quite strong; the fishing hook was no less impressive or sturdy either. Now Donar baited the hook with the ox's head, cast it overboard, and the line sank to the bottom.

"And now one can truly say that Donar teased the Mitgartschlange no less than he had been mocked by Niegart-Luge when he was supposed to pick up the cat from the ground.

"The Mitgard Serpent greedily snapped at the ox's head, so that the fishing hook lodged in its throat. As it did so, it pulled so violently that Donar slammed both fists hard against the ship's rail. This enraged him greatly; he drew upon his Aesir strength and

braced himself against it with such force that he broke through the ship's floor with both feet, pushed against the seabed, and dragged the giant worm's head toward the ship's side. And it must be said, no one has ever endured a more gruesome sight than those who had to watch as Donar fixed his eyes on the worm beneath him, while the worm stared up from below and blew its venomous breath toward the Aesir. Here it is said that the giant Hummer changed color and turned pale with terror when he saw the World Serpent rise to the surface and the sea surging in and out of the boat. But no sooner had Donar reached for his hammer and swung it into the air than the giant intervened with his fish knife and cut Donar's fishing line overboard, so that the serpent could sink back into the sea. Donar did indeed hurl his hammer after her, and it is also said that he struck her head in the depths, but I think the truth is that the Midgard Serpent still lives today and lies in the World Ocean. Donar, however, swung his hammer a second time, and this time he struck Hummer so hard behind the ear with his fist that he tumbled overboard, revealing the soles of his feet. Then he waded ashore."

Wandermut said: "Donar accomplished a tremendous feat of strength on this voyage. Have there been other such adventures involving the Aesir?"

HIGH replied: "There will be more adventures to speak of, to which the Aesir have reason to attach greater significance. And the cause of the events yet to be told was that Balder the good had a terrible dream that posed a great threat to his life. When he told the Aesir about his dream, they gathered for a council, at which it was decided to ask all of creation to grant Balder peace and protection from every danger. Fricka, his mother, then took oaths from fire and water, from iron and ore, from earth and stone, from trees and disease, from cattle and birds, from snakes and poison, that they might spare Balder. Once this was done and made known, the Aesir turned it into a pastime for Balder: they placed him in the middle of the Thing-meadow, and some were to shoot

at him, some to strike him, and some to throw stones at him; but no matter what they tried, nothing harmed him, and this seemed to everyone a great blessing.

"Luge also came and watched this, but it displeased him greatly. He took the form of an old woman, sought out Fricka in her hall, and asked her if she already knew what the Aesir were doing with her son on the Thing-meadow.

"Fricka replied that she knew full well that everyone was shooting at Balder, but that nothing could harm him: 'Neither iron nor wood can harm Balder; I have taken oaths from all things.'

"The woman asked, 'Have all things truly sworn an oath to you to spare Balder?'

"Fricka replied: 'There grows a little plant west of Valhalla called mistletoe; it seemed too young and tender to me to take an oath from it.'

"Thereupon, the woman set off again. — Luge now sought out this mistletoe, tore it out, and took it with him to the Thing-meadow. There, Hader stood alone outside the circle of men, for he was blind.

"Luge spoke to him: 'Why don't you aim at Balder as well?'

"He replied: 'Because I cannot see where Balder is standing; besides, I am unarmed.'

"Luge said: 'Do as the other men do, pay Balder the honor as well; I will show you where he stands: Shoot at him with this rod!'

"With that, he pressed the mistletoe branch into Hader's hand, and Hader shot at Balder with it, following Luge's instructions. This projectile struck Balder and pierced him, so that he fell dead to the ground, and that was the most ill-fated shot among gods and men.

"When the Aesir saw Balder fall, they all fell silent; they let their arms drop and looked at one another. But they were all thinking

of the one who had done this deed, yet they could not avenge him immediately, for they stood on sacred ground; and when they finally tried to speak, such weeping broke out at first that no one could express his grief to the others in words. Odin bore this loss most heavily, for he understood best how great the loss to the Aesir was and how dire the peril caused by the loss of Balder, his son. Gradually, the gods regained their composure. Fricka was the first to ask who among the Aesir would wish to earn all their love and favor and ride to Hel to try to find Balder there and offer Hel a ransom for Balder, so that she might let him return home to Asgard. It was Hermut, the Swift, Wodan's other son, who undertook the mission. Sausewind, Wodan's stallion, was chosen for the ride and led out. Hermut mounted him and galloped off.

"The Aesir now gathered Balder's body and carried it to the sea, where Balder's ship Ringhorn lay; it was a precious ship. The gods wanted to drive it out to sea and burn it along with Balder's funeral pyre, but the ship would not budge. They sent a message to Riesenheim to the giantess Dörrunzel. She arrived riding a wolf that was bridled with snakes. She dismounted from her beast. Wodan summoned four berserks to hold it down; but even they could not subdue it until they finally brought it to the ground. Dörrunzel stepped up to the ship's bow, and after the first light push, the ship slid into the water, so that fire shot from the rollers and the whole land trembled. At this, Donar grew furious, seized his hammer, and would have smashed the giantess's head if all the gods had not pleaded for peace on her behalf.

"Balder's body was now carried onto the ship. His wife Nanna, Neff's daughter, could not bear to watch. Her heart burst with grief, and she died. She was then laid beside Balder on the pyre, and the fire was kindled. Donar stepped forward and consecrated the funeral pyre with his hammer Malmer. At that moment, the dwarf Gestalt ran past his feet. Donar kicked him with his foot, so that he fell into the fire and burned along with it.

"Many guests were present at this cremation. First among them was Wodan; with him came Fricka, the Valkyries, and his two ravens. Froh rode in a chariot drawn by the boar Goldenborst. Weltwart rode up on his stallion Goldzopf, and Frauja arrived with her cats. A host of frost giants and mountain trolls also gathered. Wodan placed the gold ring Träufler onto Balder's funeral pyre, a ring endowed with the property that every ninth night, eight rings of equal weight would drip from it. Finally, Balder's stallion was led to the funeral pyre.

"As for Hermut, he rode for nine nights through damp depths and valleys, seeing nothing until he reached the Gellerstrom and crossed the bridge there, which was adorned with glowing gold. A maiden named Conscience guarded the bridge. She asked him his name and origin and said that yesterday five groups of dead men had ridden across the bridge: 'And it thunders no less beneath you now. You do not have the appearance of dead men; why do you wish to ride the Helweg?'

"He replied: 'I am riding to Hel to seek Balder; have you not seen him traveling along the Helweg?'

"She replied that Balder had indeed ridden across the Geller Bridge: 'From here onward, the Helweg leads downstream and then northward.'

"Hermut now rode along the road until he came to the Gate of Hel. Here he dismounted from the stallion, tightened his girth, then mounted again and spurred him on: the stallion leaped so powerfully over the high gate that he did not even graze it anywhere. Hermut rode toward the Hall of Hel, leaped from the saddle, and stepped inside. He found his brother Balder resting on a high seat and stayed with him for the night. The next morning, he asked Hel to let Balder travel home with him and told her of the great weeping among the Aesir.

"Hel replied that it first had to be proven whether Balder was as blessed in love as he claimed. If all things in the world, living

and dead, wept for Balder, he was to return home to the Aesir, but remain in Hel if even one thing objected or refused to weep for him.

"Then Hermut rose, and Balder escorted him out. There, Balder gave him the ring Träufler back for Wotan as a memento; Nanna also sent a headscarf and other gifts, and a gold ring for Fülle. Hermut rode back on his way, reached Asgard, and reported everything he had seen and heard.

"Now the Aesir sent messengers throughout the world, who were to ask everyone to weep Balder back from Hel, and all did so. Humans and every other living thing, even earth and stone, iron and wood—just as you have surely seen how all things weep when they come from the cold into the warmth. When the messengers returned home, believing their mission to be , they found a giantess sitting in a cave who called herself Grateful. She, too, was asked to weep for Balder in Hel. But she replied:

With dry tears will Grateful weep
that Balder ascended the pyre;
He was no use to me alive or as a corpse:
Let Hel, then, keep what she has!

"People suspect that this giantess was Luge herself, who had already done so much harm to the Aesir.

Wandermut spoke: "Luge brought about immeasurable evil: first he ensured that Balder would be slain, and then he also thwarted any attempt to he could be rescued from Hel's power. But how was this misdeed avenged?"

HIGH replied: "He was punished in such a way that he will remember it for a long time. The gods, as was to be expected, grew so furious with him that he fled and hid himself in a mountain. There he built himself a house with four doors, so that he could keep watch over all four cardinal directions. By day, however, he took the form of a salmon and dwelled in a waterfall called Glanzanger, often pondering to himself what ruse the Aesir might employ to catch him in the waterfall. One day, as he sat in his

dwelling, he happened to be knotting flax yarn into meshes, just as nets have been knitted ever since; but a fire was burning before him. Suddenly he realized that the Aesir were not far away, and indeed, Wotan had seen from his heavenly vantage point where he was. Luge quickly leaped out and into the waterfall; first, he threw the unfinished knitting into the fire.

"When the Aesir arrived at his home, they first sent in the man who was the wisest, whom the Aesir and the Vanir had once created together and whose name was Kwas, meaning "the Fermenting One." He immediately noticed the ashes of the burned net in the fire and suspected that this might be some kind of ruse to catch fish with it, and he reported this to the Aesir. They immediately took some flax and knotted a net modeled after they had seen in the ashes, just as Luge had done.

"With the finished net, the Aesir then went to the river and cast it into the waterfall. Donar held one end of the net, the other end was held by the rest of the Aesir, and so they pulled the net through.

"Luge swam ahead of them, but then lay down close to the bottom between two rocks, so that they pulled the net right over him; yet they sensed something alive beneath it. They then went upstream a second time and cast the net into the waterfall, but tied something so heavy to it that nothing could slip underneath it. Luge swam ahead of the net again, and when he saw that it was not far to the sea, he leaped over the taut line and shot back into the waterfall. But the Aesir saw where he was swimming. They went back upstream to the falls and spread out on both banks. Donar, however, wading in the middle of the river, followed behind the net all the way to the sea. Luge now had two options: either to flee into the open sea at the risk of his life, or—the other option—to leap over the net once more. He chose the latter and darted as fast as he could over the net line. Donar reached for him and managed to grab him, but he wriggled through his hands so that they only clung to the tip of his tail—and that is why salmon have tapered

tails ever since.

"Now Luge was caught, with no way to escape. They carried him to a nearby cave cave, dragged three long boulders over, set them on end, and bored a hole in each one. Then they captured Luge's sons, Nücke and Tücke. They transformed Tücke into a wolf, as was fitting for his nature. Then he tore his brother Nücke to pieces. The Äsen then took Tücke's intestines and used them to bind Luge across the three upright stones ; the first supported him under the shoulders, the second under the loins, and the third under the backs of the knees; but Tücke's intestines became iron bands.

"Schade found a venomous snake. The Aesir hung it above Luge so that its venom would drip onto his face.

"But Sigun, his wife, has sat beside him ever since, holding a bowl beneath the falling drops: but when the bowl runs full, and Sigun must go and empty it, the poison falls upon his face. Then he writhes so violently that the whole earth trembles, and that is what you men call an earthquake. There he now lies in chains until the downfall of the gods."

Then Wandermut asked: "Is there any other news about the twilight of the gods? I have heard nothing about it yet."

HIGH replied: "There is much and important to say about it. First, that a winter is coming—it will be called the Great Winter! Then masses of snow will drift in from all corners of the heavens; the frost will be so cold and the winds so biting that the sun no longer warms. Three winters will come in succession without a summer in between, but preceding them will be three years in which great wars will rage across the whole earth, brothers will slay one another for the sake of greed, and not even sons and fathers will spare one another in battle and clan feuds. Thus it is said in the Song of the Seeress's Vision:

Already brothers are strangling one another
and becoming murderers,
siblings are breaking the bonds of blood;
the world is full of hatred and debauchery reigns;
a time of axes, a time of swords—the shields are broken,
a time of wind, a time of wolves, the world is sinking;
not a single one wishes to spare the other.

"Now the prophecy is fulfilled, the one deemed most terrible by all: The wolf Envy devours the sun! To mankind, this is considered the greatest sacrilege. The other wolf, Hatred, seizes the moon and thus multiplies the great calamity; the stars fall from the sky. Then it shall come to pass that the earth and the high mountains shall quake, that the trees shall be torn from their roots, that the rocks shall burst, and that all bonds and ties shall snap and break. Then the World Wolf breaks free! The sea pours over the solid land, for the Midgard Serpent is seized by Jötnar's wrath and ravages the land. Now the ship Nagelfahr also sets sail—so named because it is built from the nails of the dead—and that is why the warning holds true: whoever travels with uncut nails sails forth, aids in the construction of the ship Nagelfahr, which gods and men alike wish to see completed only belatedly.

"The World Wolf races along with its jaws wide open; its lower jaw grazes the earth, its upper jaw the sky; it would gape even wider if it had the space, and fire blazes from its eyes and nose. The Midgard Serpent exhales its venom, so that it settles heavily over the air and the seas. A monstrous event unfolds as she rolls along beside the wolf. Amid this din, the heavens burst open; the sons of Flammenheim come riding, led by the Black One; blazing fire before him and behind him. His sword is exceedingly sharp and shines brighter than the sun. Just as they are about to ride across Beberast, the bridge. Then the sons of Flammenheim turn toward the field called Kampferde. They have their own battle formation, and it is magnificent. The field of Kampferde stretches a hundred Rasten in every direction. The World Wolf and the Mitgard

Serpent also come there, and Luge is there as well, along with Reif and all his Reif giants. With Luge are all the people of Hel.

"And when this hour has come, Weltwart rises and blows the Gellerhorn with all his might, rousing all the gods, who then assemble. Wotan rides to Mime's Well to seek counsel for himself and his retinue. The World-Ash, the Bearer of Salvation, trembles, and there is no being in heaven or on earth who is without fear. The Aesir arm themselves, along with all the Einherjar, and march out onto the field of Kampferde. At the forefront rides Wotan with his golden helmet, his shining armor, and his spear Schwirrer; thus he advances to meet the World Wolf. At his side strides Donar, but he can do little to help him, for he has his hands full with the Midgard . Froh fights the Black One, and a fierce battle ensues until he falls; now his death is sealed by the fact that he lacks his good sword, which he once lent to Schirner. Garm, the hellhound, has also been set free; he had been tied up before the Cave of Sorrow, the greatest place of calamity. Garrn engages in battle with Zwyst, and each brings about the other's doom. Donar does indeed deliver the death blow to the Midgard Serpent, yet he falls to the ground, having taken but a single step away from it, killed by the poisonous breath the serpent spewed upon him. As for Wotan's end, however, it is that the World Wolf devours him. Immediately, Widar turns against the wolf and presses one foot against its lower jaw. On this foot, Widar wears the shoe made from the leather scraps that have been collected throughout the ages—the scraps that people cut from the leather of their shoes where the toes and heels should be. Therefore, no one may use these scraps; rather, everyone who is intent on to come to the aid of the Aesir. With his other hand, however, Widar seizes the wolf's upper jaw and tears its throat apart; this brings about the wolf's death. Luge clashes with Wegwart, and one becomes the other's slayer. Now the Black One hurls fire across the earth and burns the entire world. Thus does the Song of the Seeress's Vision recount it:"

Weltwart blows brightly into the raised horn!
What is Wotan still murmuring with Mime's head?
The ancient ash groans in fear; its leaves tremble,
for Luge is on the loose!
What of the Aesir, what of the Alfar?
All of Jotunheim is in an uproar, the gods go to consult;
the dwarves groan before the iron gates,
he sages of the rock realm.
—Do you know of this?

Before the rock gate, the hellhound barks shrilly;
the chains snap, the world-wolf runs! —
Much becomes clear to me;
from afar I already sense the gods' doom,
the Aesir's ruin.

From the east rides Reif, shield on his arm;
the World Serpent writhes in colossal fury,
his tail lashes the waves,
the wind eagles screech and tear at the flesh
of the rust-pale corpses;
The Ship of Nails sails from the nails of the dead;
from the north a keel sails across the sea:
Luge steers it, the warriors are from Hel;
many outcasts sail with the Wolf,
and conflagration and stormy weather follow their course.
From the south the Black One sails with scorching flames,
His sword sparkles like the sun of battle,
Rocks shatter as if giants were falling,
Hel devours the people, the heavens gape wide.

Sorrow upon sorrow must now befall Fricka,
when Walvater comes to fight the Wolf
and Froh, the Sunny One, seeks out the Black One!
Yet Allvater, Fricka's confidant, must fall. —
Only the fearless son of the Father of Victory,
Widar alone, will slay the World Wolf;

He thrusts the steel into its heart with his hand,
the giant worm—Wotan is then avenged!
Then the Son of Earth, Donar, the Aesir, approaches:
the Earth-Encircler gapes with her jaws
and yawns her glowing poison toward the heavens.

Mitgart's shield-bearer strikes it bravely,
yet after nine paces he falls, slain by the poisonous breath,
to the ground before the serpent, whom nothing ever frightens!
Now all that still lives must leave this earth,
the sun goes out, the land sinks into the sea,
the cheerful stars plunge from the heavens,
the fires rage; through flaming smoke
the blazing embers lick their way up toward the heavens.

But Wandermut asked: "What will become of us when the whole world has been burned and all the gods are dead, all the Einherjar, and all mankind? You have said before that every human being will some world or another for all eternity."

Then THIRD replied: "There are many good and many evil places. The best is to be in the heavenly realm called Heilsberg; in these halls the good and the righteous will dwell. No less good for the giants—for whom even a good drink is a joy—is a place called Brause heim and lies in the land of Unkalt. A good place for the race of dwarves is Unterfelde; there stands the hall called Sinter, built entirely of gold. A large but evil hall stands on the Nachtberg; its gate faces north, and its roof is interwoven with serpent bodies, whose heads protrude into the interior of the hall and spew venom; E streams of poison flow through the hall, through which oath-breakers and assassins must wade, as the song says:"

And behold a third, far from the sun,
its gate facing north on the shore of the dead,
drops of poison drip from gables and eaves,
snakes entwine the roof like shingles.
Inside, people trudge laboriously through murky stream,
the people who committed perjury and murder.

"But worst of all is to be in the well known as the Springkessel:

There, the worm of envy, the choking dragon,
sucks on the soulless corpses!
— Do you know of this?

Wandermut asked: "Do the gods still live in any way after this, and are there still heaven and earth somewhere?"

HIGH replied: "Once more the earth rises from the sea, green and beautiful, and the fields will bear fruit without being sown. Widar and Walter live; neither the water nor the Black Flame could destroy them. They dwell on the Idafield, where Asgard once stood. Thor's sons, Courage and Might, and they bring back the hammer Malmer; Balder and Hader return from Hel. They all sit together, consult one another, recall the runes, and speak of the events that took place in times past: of the Midgard Serpent and the World Wolf. There, in the grass, the golden tablets are found again, which the Aesir had possessed before, as has been said:

Widar and Walt dwell in the sacred groves
when the Lohe has gone out;
Mut and Macht shall then wield
the Malmer after Donnerer's death.

"But there, where it is said to be in Mime's grove—that is, in the World Ash—two humans had hidden themselves during the World Fire: Joy of Life and Life. They had only morning dew for food; and from this pair of humans descend the lineages that will then inhabit the entire world:

Leblust and Leben remain hidden
in the trunk of the World Tree;
they will have only morning dew for their meal,
yet they will still bear children.

"And this, too, will seem wondrous to you: that the Sun has borne a daughter, no less radiant than herself; she will follow her mother's path, as has been said:

The light of day still gives birth to a daughter
before Fenre seizes her;
the child will then follow her mother's path
until the gods pass away.

"But if you can still ask further questions now, then I do not know where your strength comes from, for I have never heard anyone inquire more deeply into the course of time than you. Now make use of what you have heard!" After these words, Wandermut heard a great clamour all around him, and when he turned aside and looked more closely, he found himself standing out in a wide, flat field and saw neither hall nor castle. So he retraced his steps and returned home to his realm. There he recounted the things he had seen and heard, and from him, one told these stories to another.

PRÄGER'S TALES

The sea giant Ocker, or Öger—also called Leer—inhabited the island now known as Læfø, which lies between Denmark and Norway; he was extremely wealthy and skilled in magic. His wife is the sea goddess Ran, the Ravenous. She possesses the net with which she hunts all men who set sail.

Ocker had long since set out on a voyage to Asgard, and since the Aesir knew of it in advance, he was well received, although there were many things there that suggested an illusion. Toward evening, in fact, as the drinking got underway, Wotan had swords carried into the hall, which were so brilliant that they radiated a glow, and there was no other light there as long as they sat drinking. All the Aesir had come to this feast. They took their seats on their high thrones—the twelve who judge us and are named: Donar, Nord, Zwyst, Weltwart, Präger, Widar, Walter, Woller, Hennar, Vorsaß, and Luge or Lotter. With them came also the Aesir women Fricka, Frauja, Gabe, Idun, Gerda, Sigun, Fülle, and Nanna. Ocker found everything he saw around him magnificent. All the walls were hung with gleaming shields; there was intoxicating mead, and there was plenty of drinking. Präger, the Aesir poet and god, sat next to Ocker. They drank to each other's health and exchanged words. Präger recounted many events that had taken place among the Aesir. He also began to tell the story of how, once upon a time, the three Aesir Wotan, Luge, and Hennar were traveling home across a mountain range where food was in short supply. But when they descended into a valley, they came upon a herd of cattle. They singled out an ox and threw it onto the fire. When they thought it must be done by now, they raked through the embers, but it was not yet cooked. After an hour had passed, they raked through the embers a second time, but the ox was still not cooked. They discussed among themselves what could possibly be the reason.

Then they heard a voice from a tree above them, which explained that it was to blame for nothing coming to a boil on the fire. They looked up and saw an eagle; it was no small bird.

But this eagle said: “Give me my share of your ox, and then the fire will cook it.”

They agreed to give him his share of the ox. Thereupon, the eagle flew down from the tree, sat down by the fire, and immediately helped himself to both hind legs and both front legs of the ox.

This enraged Luge greatly; he seized a large pole, thrust it forward, and drove it with all his might into the eagle’s abdomen. The eagle staggered from the blow and took flight. But the pole remained lodged in the eagle’s back, and while Luge held the other end in his hands, the eagle flew just high enough that Luge’s feet struck rocks, trees, and boulders, while his arms, he thought, were about to be torn from his shoulders.

He screamed and implored the eagle for mercy.

The eagle replied that Luge would not be freed unless he could swear an oath that Idun would come to him from Asgard with her apples, which ensured eternal youth for the Aesir. Luge promised to do so.

Thereupon he was set free and hurried back to his companions, though for the time being he gave no further account of his journey.

But at the appointed time, he lured Idun out of Asgard into a nearby forest by pretending that he had found apples that seemed exceedingly desirable to him, and asked her to bring her own along to compare them. Then the wind giant Dietz—for that was the eagle—fluttered back, seized Idun, and flew off with her to Jotenheim, to his dwelling.

The Aesir became very concerned about Idun’s disappearance, for they were rapidly growing old and gray. They held a council, and one asked the other what was the last they had heard of Idun, and it turned out that she had last been seen leaving Asgard with Luge. Luge was then captured, brought before the Thing assembly,

and threatened with death and torture. He was greatly frightened and vowed to search for Idun in Jotenheim, if Frauja would lend him the falcon's cloak she possessed.

The falcon's cloak was lent to him, and he flew northward to Jotenheim. Thus, in a single day, he reached the dwelling of Dietz, the giant, and just then, as the giant had rowed out to sea and Idun was sitting alone on a mound. Luge transformed Idun into a nut, seized her with his claws, and flew as fast as he could.

When Dietz returned home, he missed Idun. He quickly slipped into his eagle's plumage, flew after Luge, and slowly approached amid the roar of his flight. When the Aesir saw the falcon flying with the nut and the eagle following, they went out before Asgard and carried a pile of wood shavings there. The falcon flew toward the castle and let itself fall behind the castle wall. Then the Aesir set the wood shavings on fire. The eagle, unable to stop its flight after missing the falcon, had the fire leap into its plumage, and its flight was over. Quickly, the Aesir closed in on the eagle and slew it within the Aesir's enclosure. This killing has become very famous.

Schade, the daughter of the Jötun Dietz, now took up a helmet and breastplate and all her weapons of war and set out for Asgard to avenge her father. The Aesir offered her a settlement and compensation, and first of all, that she might choose a husband from among the Aesir—but she was to choose only by his feet, for she was not to see any more of him.

She noticed a man's feet, which were exceptionally well-formed, and spoke. "I choose this one; little will be lacking in Balder!" But it was Nord of Nauheim.

As another form of atonement, Schade had demanded that the Aesir make her laugh, thinking that they would not be able to do so. But Luge came up with the idea of tying a string around a goat's beard and the other end around his testicles. They now pulled alternately and then loosened the string alternately, so that with

every pull, one of them cried out loudly, until finally Luge fell to his knees before Schaden. Then she, too, had to laugh. Thus peace was made between her and the Aesir. Finally, it is also reported that Wotan, to grant Schaden a penance, took Dietzen's eyes, threw them into the sky, and created two stars from them.

Ocker then said: "A great feat, it seems to me, Dietz has still managed to accomplish. From what lineage does he come?"

Präger replied: "Allwalt was his father's name, and you will find it remarkable what I am about to tell you of him. He was very rich in gold, and when he died and his sons Dietz, Ido, and Gang were to divide the inheritance, they determined as a measure of gold that each of them should take a mouthful of it—and all the same amount. And this has now become a proverb for us, and we call this 'the mouthful measure' of the Jotuns, just as we disguise the word, concealing it in the runes or in poetry, when we call gold the language, speech, or measure of the Jotuns." Ocker said "That seems to me to be well hidden in the runes." Then he asked:

"From where, I wonder, does that power come which we call poetry?"

Präger replied: "This is the beginning of the story that concerns your question: the gods were at odds with the Vanir. They finally arranged a meeting, at which they then drew into their hearts. Each of them stepped up to a vessel and spat his saliva into it. Before they parted, the gods resolved not to let this sign of peace go to waste and created from it a man whom they called Quasser, that is, the Fermenting One. He was so wise that no question remained for him whose solution he did not know. He then traveled far and wide throughout the world to teach wisdom to mankind. Thus, in response to an invitation, he also came to the two dwarves, Hehler and Stehler; they asked him for a private conversation, but instead killed him and collected his blood in two pots and a cauldron. They called the blood in the cauldron the Elixir of Life or the Elixir of Immortality, and the blood in the pots Intoxication and Atonement. They they mixed with honey, and anyone who drank

from the cup became a poet and a seer. To the Aesir, however, the dwarves said that Quasser had choked to death on his own wisdom, because there was no one knowledgeable enough to question him about it.

"Once, the two dwarves invited the Jötunn Schreier and his wife Kluge to their home. They offered Schreier the chance to go out onto the sea with him. When they were far enough from land, the dwarves rowed onto a shoal and capsized the boat, so that Schreier, who could not swim, drowned. The dwarves righted the boat, rowed ashore, and reported the accident to Klage. She felt terrible and wept loudly. Hehler asked her if it would if she were to look out to sea, where Schreier had perished. She agreed to do so. He then told his brother Stehler to lie in wait above the door and, when Klage went outside, to drop a millstone on her head, for he thought her wailing would be unbearable. — And so it happened. When the giant Süffling, Schreier's son, found out about this, he went there, seized the dwarves, drove them out onto the sea, and set them adrift on a low cliff where they were bound to drown when the tide came in. Then they begged Süffling to spare their lives and offered him, as atonement and for their father's sins, the precious mead. This agreement was concluded. Süffling gathered the mead in heaps, stored it in the so-called Scheideberg and appointed his daughter Rauschlust as its guardian.

"Hence, the art of poetry is called the blood of Quasser, the Fermenter; or the dwarves' drink; or the overflow; or the liquid of Odschöpfer; or the sea of atonement or intoxication; or the dwarves' toll, because the mead brought them the price of their lives from the skerries; or Süffling's beer; and finally, Scheideberg's liquid."

Ocker said: "Strange, though, seems to me the reason for bestowing such names upon the art of poetry. But how did the Aesir come by Süffling's mead?"

Präger replied: "That is the subject of this tale. Odin, or Wotan, once set out from home and, on the way, came to a place where

nine farmhands were mowing hay. He asked them if they would mind if he were to sharpen their scythes. They agreed, and he took a whetstone from his belt and sharpened the scythes. The farmhands felt the scythes cut much better, and they haggled with Odin over the whetstone. He valued it so highly that whoever among them wished to buy the stone should pay him a fair price. But each one cried out that he wanted it, and each one begged let him have the stone. Then Odin threw the whetstone into the air, and because they all wanted to catch it, they swung their scythes at one another so fiercely that one severed another's neck with his scythe. Odin then sought lodging for the night with the giant to whom the farmhands belonged—a man named Beuger, who was a brother of Süffling. Beuger lamented the state of his estate and told him that his nine servants had been slain and that there was no prospect of ever finding new workers. Odin called himself Bösewirk and offered to take over the work of the nine men for Beuger if he promised him a drink of Süffling's mead.

"Beuger replied that he did not have sole control over the mead, but rather said that Süffling wanted to keep it for himself. However, he said he would continue, set out with Bösewirk to see if they could obtain some of the mead.

"Bösewirk now performed the work of the nine men throughout the summer, but in winter he demanded his wages from Beuger. So they both went to Süffling. Beuger explained his agreement with Bösewirk to his brother, but Süffling flatly refused to give him even a single drop. Bösewirk then persuaded Beuger to try some scheme that might bring them closer to the mead. And Beuger agreed.

"Thereupon, Bösewirk pulled out his hub drill, called the Root of Life, and told Beuger to drill into the mountain with it, if the hub drill took hold. Beuger did so. After a while, Beuger thought the mountain had been drilled through. Böse wirk blew into the borehole, but the drill shards flew back at him. He thought Beuger was trying to deceive him and ordered him to drill through the

mountain again. Beuger continued drilling. Bösewirk blew into the borehole a second time, and this time the shards flew inward.

"Then Bösewirk transformed into a serpent and slithered into the hole, while Beuger stabbed after him but missed. Bösewirk crawled until he reached Rauschlust and lay with her for three nights. And she allowed him to drink the mead three times.

"With the first sip, he drained the elixir of life; with the second, the intoxication; and with the third, the atonement. With that, he had drunk all the mead. He took the form of an eagle and flew away in great haste. When Süffling saw the eagle soaring away, he immediately cloaked himself in an eagle's garb and flew after him. The Aesir already saw Odin flying and set a cauldron ready outside. Odin still reached Asgard and spat his mead into the cauldron. But Süffling had come so close to Odin that he would almost have caught him. Then Odin poured some of the mead over his back. But no one asked for it afterward: let whoever wants it take it. We call this the "poet's drops."

"Odin gave Süffling's mead to the Aesir and to those humans who are capable of creating something. Since then, we have called the art of poetry Odin's catch or find, his drink, his gift, or the Aesir's drink. The following song recounts this event:"

> From the mountain giant I come
> and am now returned;
> little could I gain through silence;
> I had to speak many words
> until I found advantage with Süffling,
> the Old One, in the hall.
>
> There, on a golden chair, Rauchslust
> served me three cups of the excellent drink,
> and yet I repaid the unsuspecting, sacrificial spirit
> with ingratitude all too bitterly.
> Through cunning, I made the woman suffer my desire
> — few can resist the bold —

so that by day the sensuous drink might rise
to the abode of the Lord of the World!

The root soon bored a path for me,
gnawing its way through the rock;
Staring stone above and below me:
so I risked life and limb.
Just as the heron of oblivion swoops around the feast
and steals the wits of all drinkers,
so too did its plumage fan me
as I lay in the Gracious Grotto.

Drunk, yes, more than drunk I was in Süfflings,
the hall of the old Giant.
Yet that is the true drink,
for one carries home from the intoxication
a mind even clearer!
No doubt, I would not have returned,
nor escaped the realm of the giants,
had I not savored the goodness and joy of intoxication,
which wrapped its arms around me.

The Frost Giants set out the following day
for the hall of the Heavenly High Ones
to find out whether Wotan had returned,
or whether Süffling had brought him down.
By the Ring of the World, Wotan swore an oath to him!
Who can still trust his loyalty?
He deceived Süffling out of his daughter and the drink,
beguiling and grieving his beloved.

Ocker spoke: "You have strange things to report about Wotan, and yet most—both humans and gods—will have to praise him for it and for the gift he brought them through the theft of delicious drink. Did not Donar also win famous battles against the Frost Giants? I would like to hear about that."

Präger replied: “I am well acquainted with Donar’s far-famed expeditions against the Mountain Giants and the Frost Giants. Among the many events, there is one that stands out: how Donar slew the giant Lärmer.

“Donar had once traveled the Eastern Road to slay monsters, while Wotan rode on his stallion Sausewind to Giantland and came upon a giant, or Jötunn, named Lärmer. Lärmer asked who this man was with the golden helmet, who rode through the air and across the sea, and who, he added, incidentally, had a wonderfully fine stallion. Wotan replied that he would wager his head that no animal of equal quality could be found in all of Riesenheim.

“Lärmer admitted that the stallion was good, but, he declared, his own stallion here, named Goldhaar, had a far longer stride.84At these words, he grew angry, sprang mounted his steed, gave chase to Wotan, and intended to reward him for his persuasion. But Wotan galloped away so powerfully that he was always one hill ridge ahead of him. Lärmer flew into such boundless giant rage over this, that he took no notice of anything until he stormed through the Aesir gate. When he finally stopped at the hall gate, the Aesir invited him to a drinking feast. He entered the hall and demanded a drink. He was then handed the two bowls from which Donar was accustomed to drink, and he emptied them one after the other. Soon he was drunk, and now he paid no heed in the many strong words he spoke. He declared that he would uproot all of Valhalla and carry it off to Jotenheim, but that he would sink Asgard and slay all the gods, except for Frauja and Sippia, whom he intended to take home with him. — Frauja alone dared to pour him a drink. — ‘Drink it all away!’ he cried, ‘I want everything the Aesir have.’

“When at last the Aesir grew weary of his boastful words, they called out to Donar. And immediately Donar stood in the hall, swinging his hammer Malmer through the air, and was very enraged. He asked who had advised that the dog-faced Jötunn be

allowed to drink here, and who had bought Lärmer protection to stay in Valhalla, or why Frauja should pour him a drink as if he were a true Aesir. Then Lärmer replied, and did not look at Donar with friendly eyes, saying that Wotan himself had summoned him to drink and that he stood under his protection.

"Donar threatened that Lärmer would come to regret this invitation before he even left Valhalla. Lärmer retorted that it would be little glory for an Aesir like Donar to kill him, the unarmed one: 'You would show greater resolve if you dared to fight me on the boundary at Steingarten.'

"'It was a great folly,' he said, 'that I left my shield and stone club at home, for if I had my weapons here, you would have to attempt a duel with me, otherwise I will accuse you of treachery if you kill me here while I am unarmed.'

"Donar declared that he would not for anything in the world miss the single combat to which he had been challenged, for no one had ever offered him such a challenge before. Lärmer then set out and rode mightily until he reached Riesenheim, and this journey has become widely famous among the giants, not least because it had led to a challenge between Donar and one of their own.

"The giants knew they had to be very careful to ensure that victory would fall to them, and they were filled with dread at the thought that Lärmer might fall to Donar, for he was their strongest. Therefore, they fashioned a man out of clay in Steingarten. He was nine rasts tall and three rasts wide beneath the arms. Yet they could not bring themselves to create that would have been large enough to befit him. Finally, they took the heart of a mare, but it proved to be of little steadfastness as Donar approached. Lärmer himself had—as has become very famous—a heart of hard stone, three-pointed and with sharp edges, just as the rune called 'Lärmersherz' has been carved ever since. His head, too, was made of stone, and his shield shield made of stone and wood, of unusual thickness. He held this shield before him. As a weapon,

he carried a huge whetstone slung over his shoulder. Thus he stood on the Stone Garden, awaiting Donar, and looked anything but approachable.

"At his side stood the clay giant, who called himself Nebelkalb and was very timid. It is said that he wet himself when he saw Donar coming, as he rode toward the battlefield with his servant Blitz. Blitz ran ahead of Donar, to where Lärmer stood, and called out to him: 'You stand there carelessly, giant! You're holding your shield in front of you, but Donar has long since seen you, and he's already rushing down into the earth and will approach you from below.'

"Then Lärmer pushed his shield under his feet and stood up—holding the whetstone in both hands. At first, he saw only flashes of lightning and heard loud thunder, but then he caught sight of Donar himself , roaring fiercely in the wrath of the Aesir, swinging the hammer Malmer and hurling it at Lärmer from a great distance.

"Lärmer now lifted the whetstone with both hands and hurled it at Donar, but the hammer struck the whetstone in mid-flight and split it in two. One piece fell to the ground, and from it arose all the whetstone cliffs. The other piece pierced Donar's head, causing him to crash to the ground. The hammer Malmer, however, had struck the giant Lärmer squarely in the head and shattered it into tiny pieces. Lärmer then fell on top of Donar in such a way that one of his feet rested on Donar's neck.

"Meanwhile, Blitz had attacked the clay giant Nebelkalb, and the outcome was such that no embellishments were needed to describe it.

"Now Blitz turned to Donar and tried to lift Lärmer's foot off his neck, but he could not manage it. The Asen also rushed over when they heard that Donar had fallen, and wanted to remove the foot from his neck, but they were just as unsuccessful, until finally Macht arrived, the son of Donar and the giantess Schneideeis.

Though only three nights old, he threw Lärmer's foot from Donar's neck and cried out: 'It is sad and harmful, Father, that I have come too late. I would have struck this giant down with my fist had I met you sooner.'

"Then Donar rose, greeted his son with joy, and said that he would yet accomplish great things. 'And I will,' he continued, 'give you the stallion Goldhaar, which Lärmer once owned.'

"But Wotan objected and said that Donar would be wrong to give such a fine stallion to the son of a giantess rather than to his own father.

"Donar rode home to his dwelling, the hall Treuwang; but the whetstone was still lodged in his forehead. Then the seeress Groa sought him out to interpret the meaning of the green growth, which belonged to Urwandel, the Bold. She murmured her healing incantations over Donar until the whetstone came loose. When Donar realized that there was hope of removing the stone, he wanted to reward Groa for the healing and make her happy, so he told her the story of how he had once waded across the eternal waters from the north and carried Urwandel in an iron basket on his back from the land of the giants. And he offered this as proof: that one of Urwandel's toes had protruded from the basket and frozen. Donar had broken it off, thrown it into the sky, and turned it into a star, which is now called Urwandel's toe. Donar added that it would not be long before Urwandel returned home. This made Groa so happy that she forgot the magic spells, and so the whetstone was not freed and remains lodged in Donar's head to this day. That is why it is commanded that all whetstones be thrown out of the farmland, because then the stone in Donar's head stirs."

Then Ocker said: "Lärmer was quite a mighty fellow! Didn't Donar accomplish even more feats of strength when he had to deal with fiends?"

Präger replied: "This is worth a more detailed account: how Donar went to Gerwutshof.

"For there he had neither the hammer Malmer, nor the belt of strength, nor the iron gloves with him—and that was due to the Luge, who was accompanying him. It had occurred to Luge, while he was once flying off for amusement in Fricka's falcon shirt, to fly out of curiosity to Gerwutshof, where he spotted a great hall. He alighted on the roof and peered through the chimney.

"Gerwut spotted him there and ordered that the bird be caught and brought to him. The servant who was sent out barely managed to climb up the hall wall—so high was it. Luge found it amusing to watch the man laboring to reach him and thought he would still have time to take off once the man had made the entire arduous journey back. When the man reached for him, he tried to take off quickly and pushed off vigorously with his legs, but they were stuck fast.

"Thus Luge was captured and brought before the giant Gerwut. But as soon as Gerwut looked into the bird's eyes, he suspected that it might be a man and ordered him to speak. But he remained silent. Gerwut then locked Luge in a cage and let him languish from hunger for three months. Then he took him out and gave him another chance to speak. Then Luge confessed who he was, and he saved his life only by swearing an oath to Gerwut that he would bring Donar to Gerwut's court in such a way that Donar would have neither his hammer nor his belt of strength with him. On this journey, Donar was a guest of the giantess Grida—that is, the Impetuous One—the mother of Widar the Silent. She had told him the truth about Gerwut: that he was a dog-faced Jötunn and of ill manners. She therefore lent him her belt of strength, her iron gloves, and the staff she called Grida-wohl. From there, Donar reached the water called the Primordial Whirlpool, the mightiest of all streams. He girded himself with the belt of strength and leaned on the staff Grida-wohl as he went downstream; while Luge held fast to the belt of strength from below. When Donar reached

the middle of the stream, the water rose so high that it lapped at his armpits. Then he spoke these words:

> Do not rise, O Whirlpool,
> for I must still wade through you
> to the realm of the giants;
> And even if you rise,
> know that my Aesir strength
> will also rise sky-high.

"Now Donar noticed that Gella, Gerwut's daughter, was standing high up on the mountain cliffs with her legs spread wide over the torrent, causing it to swell. Donar picked up a heavy stone from the river, hurled it at the giantess, and said: 'The river must be dammed at its source!' And he did not miss where he aimed! At that moment, a current lifted him land; he managed to grab hold of a rowan tree and thus climbed out of the water. That is where the saying comes from: 'The rowan tree is Donar's salvation.'

"When Donar finally reached Gerwut, he and his traveling companion were shown to the guesthouse for lodging. Inside, there was only a single chair to sit on, which Donar took. Soon he noticed that the chair beneath him was rising toward the ceiling . So he braced his staff, Gridawohl, against the rafters and pressed the chair down with all his might. Suddenly there was a loud crash, followed by two wild screams. Beneath his chair, Gerwut's two daughters, Gella and Grapfa, and he had broken both their spines. Then Donar spoke these words:

> Only once have I used all my Asen strength
> in the realm of the giants,
> when Gell'rin and Grapferin, Gerwut's offspring,
> sought to lift me up to the heavens.

"Meanwhile, Gerwut had invited Donar into the hall to compete with him in the games. Large fires blazed along the entire length of the hall, and when Donar faced Gerwut, the latter seized a red-hot iron wedge from the fire with a pair of tongs and hurled

it at Donar. But Donar caught it with his iron gloves and held the glowing lump in the air for a moment. Gerwut leaped behind a pillar to protect himself, but Donar threw the wedge so that it flew through the pillars, through Gerwut, through the hall wall, and out into the ground far beyond."

Ocker said: "Donar is mighty in deeds and words; therefore, I am greatly surprised that some matters seem to remain unavenged, matters that concern him even more. Or did he demand atonement from Luge for the insult to his wife when Sippia cut off her hair? How did this incident come about? Why is gold called Sippia's hair?"

Präger replied: "Luge, or Lotter—the son of Laufa—managed only through deceit to shave off all of Sippia's hair. When Donar learned of this, he seized Luge and would have shattered every bone in his body had he not sworn an oath to obtain from the Black Elves ia new hair made of gold that would grow like any other hair.

"Luge then went to those two dwarves, Dachs and Sinter, who are called the sons of Iwald. Dachs then fashioned the hair, just as he had fashioned the ship Sonnensegel and the spear Schwirrer, which Wotan wields. Then Luge wagered his head with the dwarf Dachs that his brother Sinter could not fashion three treasures as valuable as those.

"They then went to the forge, and the dwarf Sinter placed a pig's hide in the forge and ordered his brother Dachs to blow and not to stop until he took out whatever he had placed in the forge. But as soon as Sinter had left the smithy and Dachs began to blow, a fly landed on his hand and bit him. But this fly was Luge himself. The dwarf, however, kept blowing until the blacksmith pulled the work out of the forge. It turned out to be a boar with golden bristles.

"The second time, Sinter placed gold in the forge and again ordered his brother to blow and not to stop until he returned. No sooner had he gone out than the fly flew back , landed on Dachs's

neck, and stung him just as fiercely as before. Yet he continued to blow until the blacksmith returned and pulled that gold ring from the forge, which was henceforth called Träufler.

"The third time, Sinter placed iron in the forge and told his brother to blow as he had the other times and said that it would all be in vain if he stopped blowing now. And it happened as before: a fly landed between Dachsen's eyes and stung his eyelids, so that blood dripped into his eyes and he could no longer see. So he reached for them with his hands as quickly as possible—and for that long the bellows lay still—and he the fly away. Meanwhile, the blacksmith returned and explained that this time it had nearly ruined everything that was in the forge. With that, he pulled a hammer from the fire and handed all three treasures to his brother Dachs, instructing him to take them to Asgard to settle his wager with Luge.

"When Dachs and Luge presented their treasures, the Aesir took their seats as judges, and the verdict handed down by Wotan, Donar, and Froh would stand. Luge presented his treasures first: to Wotan, the spear Schwirrer; to Donar, the hair that Sippia was to wear; and to Froh, the ship Sonnensegel—and he explained the properties of the objects. The spear would never miss its target; the hair would grow into the flesh as soon as it touched Sippia's head; and the ship Sonnensegel would have a favorable wind as soon as the sails were hoisted, no matter where the journey might take them; it could also be folded up like a cloth and tucked into one's belt pouch, if one so desired.

"Now Dachs presented his treasures. He handed Wotan the ring Träufler and said, that every ninth night, eight rings of equal weight would drip from it; to Froh he gave the boar Goldenborst and said that it would run through the air and across the water, day and night, faster than any horse, and never would the night be so dark or the world so gloomy that there would not be a glow—excessive—wherever he led, his bristles would gleam.

"Finally, he presented Donar with the hammer Malmer and said that he could strike with it as hard as he wished, and at whatever came his way, and the hammer would never fail; and wherever he threw it, he would never lose it, and it would never fly so far that it would not find its way back into Donar's hand on its own, and if he wished, the hammer would become so small that he could carry it under his cloak—alas, it had one flaw—the handle was too short. The judges' verdict, however, was that they declared the hammer to be the finest of all treasures, for it was the best defense against the Frost Giants, and with that they decided that the dwarf had won the wager. Luge now asked to be allowed to free his head, but the dwarf replied that there was little hope of that.

"'Then catch me!' cried Luge.

"But just as the dwarf was about to grab him, he was already far away. For Luge had shoes, that carried him through the air and across the sea. The dwarf then asked Donar to seize Luge, and he did so. Dachs now wanted to cut off Luge's head, but Luge objected: Dachs might indeed have a claim to his head, but not to his neck. The dwarf then pulled out a knife and a strap and wanted to pierce holes in Luge's lips to sew his mouth shut, but the knife would not cut. Then he thought his brother Sinter's awl would be better suited, and no sooner had he mentioned it than it appeared and pierced Luge's lips. He then sewed them together, but Luge tore the seam open again as he opened his mouth. The strap, with which Luge's mouth was sewn shut, is called Guardian or also Tau, which means 'tied' or 'closed.'"

Ocker said: "I can see that you, Präger, are aware of many events and know the terms with which the skalds describe, in various ways, things that are unknown to us. Can you tell me, for starters, why is gold called Otterbuße?"

Präger replied: "It is said that Wotan, or Odin, Luge, and Hennar once set out to explore all the worlds. So they also came to a river and walked along it until they reached a waterfall. An otter made its home in this waterfall. It had just caught a salmon, was

sitting on the bank, and was eating it while squinting, because it couldn't bear to watch the fish dwindle away. Luge picked up a stone, threw it at the otter, and struck it on the head. He then boasted that with a single throw he had killed both an otter and a salmon. They took the salmon and the otter with them.

"Toward evening they reached a farmstead and entered the house. The farmer who lived there called himself Reidmar; he was a mighty man, possessed secret knowledge, and was very skilled in magic. The Asen asked him for a place to spend the night; but, they added, they had brought their own supper and showed the farmer their game. When Reidmar saw the otter, he called his sons Fafner and Reigen over and said that that their brother, the otter, had been slain and who had done it. Then the father and his sons turned against the Asen, seized and bound them, and declared that the otter had been Reidmar's son. The Asen offered, as a ransom for their lives, as much property as Reidmar himself would determine, and this was agreed upon between them and sealed with oaths.

"Thereupon, the otter was skinned. Reidmar took the otter's hide and decreed that the Asen should fill the hide with red gold and also completely cover it from the outside with it: then they would be at peace. Hence comes the legal principle of making restitution in abundance.

"Wotan then sent Luge to the realm of the Dark Elves. Luge came upon the dwarf's answer—that is to say, self-defense—who lived as a fish in a waterfall. Luge captured him and demanded as ransom all the gold the dwarf had in his rock. They entered beneath the rocks, and the dwarf brought forth all the gold he possessed—and it was a truly mighty hoard! As he did so, the dwarf made a small gold ring vanish from under his hand. But Luge, who saw this, ordered him to add the ring to the gold.

"The dwarf begged him not to take this ring away, because with it—if he were to, he could multiply his gold again, for the ring was a 'helper in times of need.'

"But Luge replied that he should not keep a single penny, took the 'helper in times of need' ring from him as well, and turned to leave.

"Then Notwehr called after him, saying that the ring would become the death of whoever possessed it.

"Luge replied that this suited him just fine; and, he added, it would come to pass just as he had foretold—he intended to whistle that very tune into the ears whoever accepted the ring.

"With that, he set off on his way back and arrived at Reidmarshof, where he showed Wotan the gold; he also showed him the Nothelfer ring. Wotan found it so exceedingly beautiful that he took it from the pile before handing the gold over to Reidmar.

"Reidmar now stuffed the otter bladder full of gold, as much as he could, and then set it upright. Now Wotan set about completely enveloping the skin with the gold. When he was finished, he asked Reidmar to come closer and check that the skin was completely covered.

"Reidmar stepped forward, examined everything closely, but discovered a single whisker, which he demanded be covered as well, or else their agreement would be null and void.

"Then Wotan produced the ring Nothelfer, concealed the whisker, and said that he was now free of the otter's penance.

"Once Wotan had taken up his spear and Luge had received his shoes, and there was nothing else to fear, Luge declared that what the dwarf Notwehr had prophesied, namely, that the ring Nothelfer and the hoard of gold would bring death to whoever possessed them. And so it has been ever since. That is why the gold is called Otterbuße, or Notgeld of the Aesir, or Zankerz."

Ocker then asked: "How, then, did the prophecy come true for Reidmar?"

Präger replied: "You shall now hear this: Because Reidmar had received the gold as a 'son's price,' his sons Fafner and Reigen now demanded their share as 'brother's price.' But Reidmar would not grant them a single penny of the gold, and this became a source of resentment for the two brothers, for they slew their father over it. Reigen now demanded that Fafner divide the gold equally between them. But Fafner replied that there was little chance he would share the gold with his brother after he had killed their father over it, and advised Reigen to make his escape quickly, or else he might meet the same fate as Reidmar.

"Fafner had taken possession of the sword Rausching and the helmet that had belonged to Reidmar. He placed this helmet on his head; it was called the Helmet of Terror, because every living creature who saw it, was filled with dread. So Reigen fled, taking the sword Schwirrl from Reidmar's inheritance with him. Fafner, however, went to the Niederheide, set up camp there, transformed himself into the form of a dragon, and lay down over the gold.

"Reigen then made his way to Helferich, the king of Thy, and became his blacksmith. There he took Siegfried under his wing to raise and train him —the son of Sigmund, of the Wälsung line, and Gerda, the daughter of Eugel. Siegfried became the mightiest of all the kings of the army in terms of lineage, physical strength, and character.

"Reigen told him much about how Fafner lay upon the gold, and he greatly urged him to go and retrieve it. He also forged for him the sword called Gram, which was so sharp that when Siegfried dipped it into flowing water, it cut a flake of wool in half as the current had driven against its blade. With that same sword, he also split Reigen's anvil right down to the wooden stump.

"In the end, both Siegfried and Reigen rode to the Niederheide. There, Siegfried dug a pit along Fafner's trail and sat down inside it. When Fafner crawled toward the water and came over the pit, Siegfried pierced him with the sword, and that was Fafner's death. Now Reigen also ran up and said that Siegfried had slain his

brother; but as penance, he demanded only that Siegfried take Fafner's heart and roast it for him over the fire. Thereupon he bent down to the ground, drank of Fafner's blood, and then lay down to sleep.

"Meanwhile, Siegfried roasted the heart, and when he thought it was ready and touched it with his finger to see if it was still hard, the juice ran from the heart over his finger. In doing so, he burned himself and put his finger in his mouth. But as Fafner's heart's blood touched his tongue, he understood the language of the birds and could make out what the gray titmice were chirping in the tree above him. One of them sang:

> There sits Siegfried now, stained with blood,
> roasting Fafner's heart over the fire,
> It seemed wiser to me that the treasure-rich hero
> himself should eat the boiling flesh.
> And over there lies Reigen,
> holding a council within himself
> to betray the one who trusts him,
> and pondering words, gathering his wrath,
> and brooding on avenging his brother.

"Then Siegfried went to Reigen and slew him. Then he mounted his stallion Graue and rode until he reached Fafner's lair, gathered up all the gold, bound it into a load, and placed it upon Graue's back. Afterward, he mounted himself and rode on his way.

"This explains why the gold is called Fafner's lair or bed, the dust of the lowlands, or Graue's burden."

Ocker said: "And thus the dwarf's prophecy was fulfilled."

But Präger replied: "Far from it! Siegfried then rode on until he found a house on a mountain. Inside, a woman slept, wearing a helmet and armor. He drew his sword and cut the armor from her. This awakened her, and she called herself Hilde. That was Brünhild, the Valkyrie. Siegfried rode on and came to the king named Gibich; his wife was Grimhild. Their children were named

Gunther, Hagen, and Gudrun; Guntwurm was Gibich's stepson. Siegfried stayed there for a long time. He married Gudrun, Gibich's daughter, and Gunther and Hagen formed a blood brotherhood with him.

"And so it came to pass that Siegfried once rode with the Gibich sons to King Etzel Botelsohn to ask for Brünhild—who was his sister—for Gunther. She still lived on the Hinterberg. But a swirling flame burned around her hall, and she had vowed to give herself only to the man who dared to ride through the fire. Siegfried now rode up the mountain toward Brünhild with the Gibichs—who are also called the Nibelungs—and Gunther was to ride through the billowing flames. But the stallion he was riding, named Gote, balked at leaping over the ring of fire. So Siegfried and Gunther exchanged forms and names, for the stallion Graue would not go under any man but Siegfried. So Siegfried leaped onto Graue's back and galloped through the billowing flames.

"That very evening he celebrated his wedding night with Brünhild, but when they went to bed, Siegfried drew his sword Gram from its sheath and placed it between himself and Brünhild. The next morning, he rose, dressed, and gave Brünhild the gold ring Nothelfer—which he had captured on the Niederheide and which Luge had taken from the dwarf Notwehr—as a parting gift, and slipped another ring from Brünhild's hand as a memento. Then Siegfried mounted the stallion Graue once more and returned to his traveling companions. There he exchanged forms with Gunther once again, and Gunther now rode home with Brünhild to his father Gibich.

"Siegfried, however, had two children with Gudrun: Siegmund and Schwanhild. Once it happened that Brünhild and Gudrun went to the river to wash their hair. When they reached the river, Brünhild waded out from the bank deeper into the middle of the stream and said she would not tolerate the water running from Gudrun's hair on her own head, since she had a man of higher spirit. Then Gudrun followed her into the river and said that her

hair might well wash over her in the current, for she belonged to the man whose boldness neither Gunther nor any other man in the world could match—for he had slain Fafner and Regin and taken both their inheritances. Brünhild replied: 'It was worth more that Gunther rode through the Waberlohe, which Siegfried did not dare to do.'

"Then Gudrun laughed and cried out: 'Do you perhaps mean that Gunther rode through the Waberlohe? I think the one who climbed into bed with you is the one who gave me this gold ring. But the ring you wear on your hand—the one you received as a morning gift—is called Nothelfer, and I do not believe Gunther brought it from the Niederheide.'

"Brünhild remained silent and went home. But from then on, she goaded Gunther and Hagen to kill Siegfried. However, since these two were Siegfried's sworn brothers, they incited Guntwurm, her stepbrother, to do it. He pierced Siegfried with his sword while he slept. Yet when the wound struck him, Siegfried hurled his sword Gram at Guntwurm and cut the man in two.

"Thus Siegfried fell, and with him his three-year-old son, whom they killed to escape retribution.

"Thereupon Brünhild pierced herself with her sword and was burned along with Siegfried. Gunther and Hagen then took possession of Fafner's inheritance and the Nothelfer ring, and ruled over Siegfried's lands.

"King Etzel Botelsohn, Brünhild's brother, later took Gudrun —who had been Siegfried's wife—as his own wife, and they had children together. King Etzel wanted to seize the hoard of gold and avenge the death of Brünhild, his sister, so he invited Gunther and Hagen to his court. Gudrun sent a warning to her brothers, but they accepted his invitation nonetheless. Before they set out, they cast all the gold from Fafner's hoard and the Nothelfer ring into the Rhine, and this gold has never been found since. King Etzel had gathered a large crowd around him; he pounced on Gunther

and Hagen and took them both prisoner. He then searched for the gold, but Gunther said that the Rhine should decide the fate of the Nibelung hoard. So Etzel had Hagen's heart cut out while he was still alive and had Gunther thrown into the snake pit. There, Gudrun secretly brought him a harp, which he struck with his toes —since his hands were bound—and he played the harp so skillfully that all the snakes fell asleep except for one viper, which slithered up his body and bit him beneath the chest. Then it thrust its head into the cavity and clung to his liver until he was dead. That is why the Nibelung gold is called the Hort or Erbe."

Ocker said: "Your account is complete, and an astonishing number of mighty men have been killed for the sake of this gold."

But Präger said that Ocker would have even more cause for astonishment once he had finished his tale.

"Listen further: immediately afterward, to avenge her brothers, Gudrun killed her two sons, whom she had borne to Etzel, and had their skulls fashioned into drinking cups lined with silver and gold. When the funeral feast was held for the Nibelungs, Gudrun served King Etzel mead mixed with the children's blood in these cups. She also had their hearts roasted and gave them to the king to eat. Once this was done, she herself confessed her deed to him with many wicked words.

"There was no shortage of a shortage of potent mead, so that most of the people fell asleep right where they were sitting. That very night, Gudrun approached the drunken king while he slept, accompanied by Hagen's son—her brother's son—and they struck him, and that was his death.

"Then they set fire to the hall, and Etzel and all the people who were inside were burned to death.

"Gudrun then hurried to the sea, leaped into the waves, and tried to drown herself, but she was driven across the bay and reached a land ruled by King Jonaker. He saw her, took her in, and made her his wife. They had a son together, Erp. Hamedich and

Sarlo, however, were Jonaker's sons by another mother.

"Along with them, Schwanhild, the daughter of young Siegfried and Gudrun, also grew up, and she was the fairest of all women. King Ermanrich the Wealthy also heard of her. He sent his son Weihrand to woo her. As soon as he arrived at Jonaker's court, Schwanhild was entrusted to him so that he might bring her to King Ermanrich, his father. Then Sibich, King Ermanrich's advisor, who was accompanying Weihrand on his journey, thought it would be more fitting for Weihrand to marry Schwanhild, since he was as young as she was. This advice pleased the young couple. But Sibich reported this to the king. So King Ermanrich had his son imprisoned and led to the gallows. There, Weihrand took his falcon, plucked its feathers, and asked that it be brought to his father in this state; then he was hanged.

"When King Ermanrich saw the falcon, it occurred to him that he, too, was now flightless and featherless like the falcon, and thus his kingdom was also without protection, for he was old and sonless. As he returned with his retinue from the forest where they had been herding cattle and caught sight of Schwanhild sitting there bleaching her hair, he flew into a rage out of grief and ordered his men to ride over her. They trampled her to death under the hooves of their stallions.

"When Gudrun learned of this, she incited Erp, her son and Hamedich and Sarlo, his stepbrothers, to avenge Schwanhild. But she was slow to set out. So Gudrun provided them with spears and swords of such strength that no metal would stick to them. She also advised them to attack King Ermanrich at night while he slept. Sarlo and Hamedich were to cut off his hands and feet, while Erp was to cut off his head.

"They now set out on their way. Then they wondered what help they could expect from Erp if they encountered King Ermanrich. He replied that he would help them just as the hand helps the foot. They thought that was truly not much—what use is the hand to the foot?—and since they were very angry that his mother had sent

them away with harsh words, they wanted to do something that would displease her most, and they killed Erp, because they loved him the most.

"Immediately afterward, as Sarlo walked toward the horses, he stumbled and supported himself with his hand. Then he said: 'Now the hand has helped the foot. It would surely be better if Erp were still alive.'

"That night they broke into King Ermanrich's castle, while he was still asleep, and cut off his hands and feet. Then he awoke and called out to his men, telling them to rise. Then Hamedich said: 'His head would already be off by now if Erp were still alive.'

"And already the king's men leaped to their feet and attacked the brothers, but they could not harm them with their weapons. But Ermanrich called out to them: 'Now stone them to death with stones.' And so it happened. Then Sarlo and Hamedich fell, and now Gibich's entire lineage and all his descendants were dead.

"Thus the gold became the death of everyone who possessed it, and of many others as well."

Ocker said: "Now there are other names for the gold that I have heard of, and I am eager to hear how you will explain them to me." And he asked: "Why is gold called Frotes Mehl?"

Präger replied: "To explain that, it must first be said that Wotan had a son named Schildung, from whom the Schildunge are descended. He resided in and ruled the land that is now called Denmark, but was then still known as Gotland. Schildung's son was Friedleib, and his son was Frote, meaning "the Wise." King Frote took over the realm, and because he was the mightiest of all kings in the Northern Lands and maintained peace everywhere, peace was attributed to him in all Nordic tongues, and the Northmen called this peace the Frote Peace. No one harmed another in those days, and even if he had his father's murderer in his hands—whether free or bound—he would not have harmed him. Nor were there any thieves or robbers, and a gold ring could

lie on the highway for three years without anyone picking it up.

"At that time, two millstones were found in Denmark, so large that no one was strong enough to set them in motion. This mill had the unique ability to grind anything whatever the miller told it to. The mill was called Grote, and Hängemaul was the name of the man who gave the mill to the king.

"King Frote then accepted an invitation from King Vielgestalt to visit Sweden. There he bought two maidservants, Fenja and Menja; they were extraordinarily tall and strong. He had these maidservants taken to the mill and ordered them to grind gold, and so they did. They ground gold, peace, and happiness for him. But from that moment on, he gave them no more rest or sleep than the cuckoo is silent or a song is sung. It is said that while doing so, they sang a song, the Mill Song. But before they stopped singing this song, they had ground up an enemy army for the king, so that that very same night a sea king, named Mausing, landed, slew Frote, and took a vast amount of booty. Thus did the Frote Peace come to an end.

"Mausing hauled the mill, Fenja, and Menja onto his ship and ordered them to grind salt. At midnight, they asked if Mausing was not tired of the salt. But he ordered them to keep grinding. So they ground for a short while longer, but ground with such furious rage that the grinding box broke, the mill toppled, and the stones, as they fell, dragged the ship down into the depths. But where the water plunged through the holes in the millstones, a whirlpool formed that remains to this day, and the sea became salty from the grinding. This song tells of it:

> Now they have come, foretelling the future,
> Fenja and Menja, to the prince's house;
> they are to serve as maids, these mighty maidens,
> kept by Frote, the son of Friedleib.
>
> He had the maids led to the mill,
> to set the ancient stones in motion;

from that moment on, he called them
to neither rest nor respite,
wishing only to hear the echo of their labor.

And so Fenja and Menja began their song:
"We grind for Frote power and peace,
and a wealth of gold at the mill of fortune.
may he sit in riches and rest on down;
if he awakens to delight, then we have ground well!

May no one now cause another grief,
nor do any evil, nor seek bloodshed.
May no one strike with a cutting sword,
even if he himself held his brother's murderer in custody!
Long did we let the maids make the millstone roar;
now let the mill and stone stand still!"

But once again Frote urged the maids to grind,
and this was his sole, urgent word:
"Sleep no longer than the cuckoo's call is silent.
No longer than a single tune is sung!"
They sang and swung the swinging millstone,
while most of Frote's servants had already fallen asleep:

"Frote, friend of noble men,
you lacked prudent caution when purchasing your maids;
you chose us too much by our appearance and stature
and paid little heed to our lineage:
we two, white, were born to Beute and Aar,
the two mountain giant brothers.

We two were playmates of Winter,
growing mighty within the earth;
then we maidens stood by mighty works,
we helped the hills and mountains rise

and rolled the boulders to the giants' fortress:
thus we hurled the massive stones
and mighty boulders into the realm of men,
so that the earth trembled far and wide!

Then, as maidens of battle, we marched and fought,
knowledgeable of the future, as a pair among the people,
slashing through the ranks and shattering the shields,
and marching against the gray-armored horde.
We supported some and brought down others;
no peace came until the dice had fallen!

With sharp spearing spears we spattered blood
and struck up red-flaming fires from wounds.
for many a summer year we fared thus,
we were known among the warriors of the battle!
Now we have come to the king's house,
held here as maids without compassion,
we stand in the mud and our shoulders are numb.

So we grind away joylessly at Frote's mill.
And Grote remained forever but a gray crag,
and never did the stone rise from the ground here;
we, the mountain giants' brides, did not grind the mill—
had you only suspected such things of our lineage:
for hands would rest and the stone would cease,
we ground enough for ourselves, we brought it to an end,
yet there is no rest for our hands,
until Frote deems the millwork fully finished.

Stretch out your hands!
Gaze upon pointed spears and bloody weapons!
Arise, Frote, awaken!
Awaken and hear now ancient legends from our song!
Already the fires blaze in the east of the castle

as warning signs that the lord's call has awakened—
an army is advancing in hasty formation
and will soon burn down the castle for you, O Lord.
You can hold onto nothing, not the high seat of the hall,
not rings of gold, nor the Grote of fortune,
and even if we were to grind the mill more restlessly still.

Once we flourished in the blood of battle;
now we, daughters of the giants, grind with might
the death of all the brave, just as we envisioned!
And even if the framework of the sturdy supports collapses,
the one reinforced with iron: let us keep grinding!
Let us keep grinding! Let the mill come to ruin!"

So the maidens ground with toil and might,
the women raged in the giants' fury,
the grinding trough broke and the beams crashed down,
even the mountain-heavy stone shattered into pieces.
The mountain giant brides roared once more:
"So we grind, Frote! Rightly shall it be said,
'The maids have stood by the stone long enough.'"

Ocker spoke: "People mostly and eagerly seek gold, and yet it seems unlikely that it is of much use to them. Tell me this: for what reason is gold called the Seed of Kracke?"

Präger replied: "There was a king in Denmark named Rolf Kracke; he was one of the most famous kings of ancient times, renowned for both his kindness and his boldness. Here is an example of his kindness, which is often recounted in old legends.

"A young lad with nothing to his name, a farmer's son named Wiege, came one day into King Rolf's hall. The king was still young at the time and of slight build. Now, people call a poor, scrawny horse a Kracke. Wiege stepped before him and looked him over closely.

"The king asked: 'What do you mean by this, lad, looking at me like that?'

"Wiege replied: 'When I was still at home, I heard people say that King Rolf was the greatest man in the Northern Lands, and now here on the high seat sits a little Kracke, and they call call him their king.'

"Then the king replied: 'Hey, lad! You've given me a name, and I suppose I'll be called Rolf Kracke from now on; but it's customary among us that a gift should follow the naming. Since I see that you yourself have nothing you could give me or that would be suitable for me, let the one who has something better give to the other.'

"With that, he pulled a gold ring from his arm and gave it to Wiege. Then Wiege cried out: 'Give it to me, O holiest of all kings! And here I swear this oath: to become the murderer of the man who becomes your murderer!' The king spoke and laughed: 'Small things bring joy to the small!'

"Another example tells of Rolf Kracke's boldness: at that time, a king named Adal reigned in Uvfala; he was married to Ursa, Rolf's mother. He was at odds with King Walo of Norway. Both marked out a battlefield in the middle of the Eife on Lake Vänern. King Adal then sent a message to Rolf Kracke, his stepson, to come to his aid and promised his entire army pay for the duration of the campaign. Rolf himself, however, could take possession of three treasures of his choosing in Sweden. King Rolf could not come to his aid personally, as he was at war with the Saxons at the time, but he sent Adal his twelve bereserks. In the ensuing battle, King Walo and a large portion of his forces fell. King Adal took the helmet Kampfeber and the stallion Rabe from the dead man.

"Now Rolf Kracke's berserks also demanded to receive their pay: three pounds of gold for each; furthermore, they demanded to be allowed to deliver the treasures they had selected for Rolf Kracke—namely, the helmet Kampfeber, the chain mail Finnseigen, neither of which could be pierced by iron, and the gold

ring Schwedenferkel—all items that had once belonged to Adal's ancestors. But Adal refused to hand over these three treasures and did not give them the agreed-upon pay either.

"The berserks had to withdraw, deeply dissatisfied with the outcome of the matter. They reported this to King Rolf Kracke. He immediately set out on a new expedition and soon arrived with his ships on the Führ River. From there he rode into Uppsala, accompanied by his twelve berserks, even though they were not welcome there.

"His mother Ursa welcomed him warmly and followed him to the inn, but not into the king's hall. There, fires had been lit for them and they were served ale to drink. King Adal's men came in and hauled more wood. They stoked the fires so fiercely that the clothes of Rolf and his men began to burn. They also asked whether it was right that Rolf Kracke and his berserks feared neither iron nor fire?

"Then Rolf Kracke leaped to his feet—his men with him—and uttered the words: 'Stoke the embers higher in Adal's house!'

"With that, he seized his shield and threw it into the fire. Then he leaped over the flames while the shield burned, shouting: 'The fire does not flee from those who ride over it!' One by one, his men leaped after him. Then they seized the men who had stoked the fire so fiercely and threw them into the flames.

"Now Lady Ursa, Rolf's mother, presented him with the horn of an aurochs filled with gold and the Schwedenferkel ring, and urged him to ride off quickly to his army. They mounted their stallions again and rode off across the Führaue. But already they saw King Adal and his armed men galloping after them, intent on killing them. Then Rolf Kracke reached into the horn with his right hand and gradually scattered the gold onto the path. When Adal's men saw this, they leaped from their saddles and picked up as much of the gold as they could find, but King Adal ordered them to ride on and chased after it himself as fast as he could. He

rode the stallion Schleuder, who was the swiftest of all stallions in Sweden.

"Rolf Kracke could clearly see King Adal drawing ever closer to him, so at last he took the ring Schwedenferkel, threw it to Adal, and called out that he should accept it as a gift. King Adal rode after the ring, picked it up with the tip of his spear, and let it slide down the shaft. Rolf Kracke looked around, and saw him bend down and speak. 'Like a pig, I have humbled the one who considers himself the most powerful in Sweden.' And with that, they parted ways.

"For this reason, the gold is called 'the seed of the Kracke' or 'the seed from the Führaue.' Here, another reason may also be mentioned: why is the gold 'Helge's grave covering'?

"It is reported that a king named Helge—meaning 'the Sanctified,' after whom the island of Helgoland is named—once lived and was the father of Thorgerd Helgebraut. Both were honored with sacrifices. After Helge's death, a mound was raised over him. The first layer consisted of gold and silver—that was the sacrificial offering—while the second layer was made of earth and stones. That is why the gold is called "Helge's burial mound."

Ocker said: "My questions have been answered in full and in detail."

But Präger replied: "You still do not know that!—Why is the gold called the foliage or leaves of Glast?

"In Asgard, before the gates of Valhalla, lies a grove called Glast or the Glast Forest. Its foliage is made entirely of pure gold, just as the song says:

> The Glast Forest stands there
> with golden foliage before Siegvater's hall!

"That is the most beautiful forest among gods and men.

"Now I have explained to you all the names for gold in the language of the skalds, and it seems that you no longer desire further information. Last but not least, however, I would like to examine the origin of another figurative term, even though it has no connection to gold, namely: why is battle called 'the weather' or 'the storm of the Hedinge'? Why are weapons called 'the flames' or 'the rods of the Hedinge'? This saga tells the story:

"A king named Hagen had a daughter named Hilde, which means 'warrior.' She was taken prisoner by a king named Hedin, son of Schnarrer, while Hagen was away at a royal council. When he heard that his kingdom had been raided and his daughter carried off, he rode with his band after Hedin to search for him, and learned that he had turned north. Hagen followed him to Norway, but there he heard that Hedin had sailed across the Western Sea. Hagen sailed after him as far as the Orkney Islands, and when he reached the island of Hoy, Hedin was anchored there with his ships.

"Hilde then sought out her father and, in Hedin's name, offered him a precious necklace as a token of reconciliation: if he did not accept it, she said, Hedin would be ready to fight, and Hagen would then have no hope of mercy from him. Hagen replied only briefly to his daughter, and when she returned to Hedin, she told him that Hagen did not want a settlement and asked him to prepare for battle. So both Hagen and Hedin did just that; they went ashore and mustered their men.

"Then Hedin called out to his brother-in-law Hagen once more and offered him a settlement and much gold as compensation. But Hagen replied: 'You offer this too late if you wish to make a truce, for I have now drawn my sword, Sleeper, from its sheath—the sword the dwarves forged, and which must claim a man's life every time it is drawn: its blow never misses, and no wound inflicted by it ever heals.'

"But Hedin cried out: 'You boast of the sword, but not yet of victory. I call a sword good that remains faithful to its master!'

Then they began the battle, which is called the 'Weather' or the 'Storm of the Hedinges,' and they fought throughout the entire day, and in the evening the kings returned to their ships.

"But that night, Hilde went to the battlefield and, using secret magic, roused all the dead. The next day, the kings met again on the battlefield, as did all who had fallen the day before: Thus the battle raged on, day after day, and all the men who fell there, and all the weapons that lay there, and all the shields and helmets on the battlefield turned to stone at dusk. But as soon as day broke, all the dead warriors rose again, and all the weapons became usable once more; and so, according to the songs, the Hedinge would continue to fight until the end of the gods."

These are Präger's tales. Now it remains to tell how Ocker himself later gave rise to a new name for gold. And this is how it happened:

When Ocker was ready to set out on his journey home, he asked Wotan and all the Aesir to come to him after three months had passed. In addition to Wotan, Nord, Froh, Zwvst, Präger, and Widar, Luge attended this feast, as well as the Aesin: Fricka, Frauja, Gabe, Schade, Idun, and Sippia. Donar had not come, for he had once again journeyed east to slay monsters. When the gods were seated in their chairs, Ocker had Glanzgold carried onto the floor of the hall, and it brightened and illuminated the hall as fire usually does.

At this feast, everything took care of itself—food, drink, and service—in short, everything necessary for a banquet— happened of its own accord. His house was a most sacred sanctuary of peace. Everyone praised how good the service was at Ocker's. Luge did not like to hear this and slew one of Ocker's servants, named Feuerfang. His second servant is named Irrwisch. At that time, Luge also reviled all the Aesir, as is recounted in the song of the gods' drinking feast. From this feast, Ocker's gold is called "Fire."

THE NORNS' GUEST

For Mathilde von Kemnitz

Thus begins the tale of Nornengast:

It is told that at a time when King Olaf, son of Trautmann, resided in Trondheim, it came to pass that a man arrived late in the evening and greeted him with due respect. The king received him graciously and asked who he was. The man said his name was Gast.

The king said: "You shall be a guest here, whatever your name may be."

Gast replied, "I have told you my true name, my lord! And I am happy to accept your hospitality, if I have the choice."

The king said that the choice was his. But since the day was already drawing to a close, the king did not wish to speak further with Gast, for he went immediately afterward to evening prayers, then to supper, and finally to rest and sleep.

That very night, King Olaf Trautmannsohn awoke in his bed and recited a few prayers, while all the other men slept in the dormitory. It seemed to the king that an elf or some spirit was entering the house despite the closed doors. He went to each of the men's beds where they lay sleeping and finally came to the bed of a man who lay closest to the outside.

There the apparition paused and said: "A most wondrous sign stands here before an empty house, but the king is not quite as wise as some claim—that he is the wisest of all men—since he now sleeps so soundly." With that, it vanished through the closed doors.

Early the next morning, the king sent his valet to find out who had used that bed during the night. It turned out that a guest had been lying there. The king had him summoned and asked him whose son he was.

He replied: "My father's name was Tord, and he was called Bitterrat. His family is Danish, and he lived on an estate in Denmark called Gröningen."

"You are a fine man!" said the king.

This Gast was bold in speech, taller than most other men and stronger, though he was already approaching old age. He asked the king for permission to remain among his retinue for a time.

The king asked if he were a Christian. Gast replied that he had made the sign of the cross, but had not been baptized. The king decided that he should have the right of residence among his retinue: "But you will not remain with me unbaptized!

And that was why the Spirit had spoken those words about the wondrously powerful sign before the empty house, for the guest had indeed crossed himself that evening like the other men, but was, in essence, a pagan.

The king asked further: "Are you in any way a man of the arts?" He replied that he could play the harp and tell stories that everyone would enjoy.

The king said: "Your king does wrong by allowing unbaptized men to wander from country to country outside his realm."

Gast replied: "Such things cannot be held against the Danish king, for I left Denmark long before Emperor Otto had burned the Danish Code and forced King Harald, son of Garm, along with Hakon, the Sacrificial Jarl, to become Christians."

The king asked the guest many other questions, and the guest answered them all in a dignified and intelligent manner. It is said that Gast came to King Olaf Trautmannson in the third year of his reign. It remains to be mentioned that he remained with the king and was assigned a seat farther out among the guests. He was a well-mannered man, calm and well-bred, popular with most men and highly respected.

Shortly before the Yule festival, Wolf the Red returned home with his band of men. He had been away on the king's errand throughout the summer and had served in the local militia at Wik in the fall against the Danish raids, and was accustomed to

spending the depths of winter with King Olaf. Wolf had many fine treasures to present to the king, which he had acquired over the course of the summer, including, in particular, a gold ring called "Nietung" because it was riveted together from seven parts, each with a distinct color. It was also of much finer gold than other rings. Wolf had obtained this ring from a farmer named Zottelmund; however, King Half had previously owned it. Zottelmund had asked Wolf in return to protect and maintain his farm with King Olaf's help. Wolf had promised to do so.

The king celebrated the Yule festival in grand style while he was staying at Drontheim. On the eighth day of the festival, Wolf the Red presented King Olaf with the ring Nietung. The king thanked him for this gift and for all the faithful service he had always rendered him.

The ring was passed around the inn where the men were drinking, for at that time no special drinking halls had yet been built in Norway. Each man showed it to the next, and the men believed they had never seen gold as fine as that in the ring. Finally, it made its way to the guests' bench and thus reached the unknown guest. He looked at the ring and handed it back on his open palm, with which he had just held the goblet; he apparently thought little of it and said nothing about this treasure, but continued with the jesting remarks he was making to his drinking companion.

An inn boy, who was pouring drinks at the outer guest bench, asked the men: "Do you like the ring?"

"We like it very much indeed," they cried, "except for the newcomer. He finds nothing in it, and therefore it seems to us that he understands nothing of it either, as long as he pays no heed to such things."

The innkeeper went to the center of the hall, stepped before the king, and relayed to him the guests' verdict and how little this newcomer had said about it when such a treasure had been shown to him.

But the king said: "The unknown guest knows more than you suppose. He is to come back tomorrow and tell me a story, for he claims to be able to do so."

Meanwhile, the guests on the outer benches were conversing with the guest. He was asked where he had ever seen gold of equal weight or even better.

"Is that why," he replied, "it strikes you as strange that I speak so little of it? Certainly, I have seen gold that was by no means inferior—it seemed rather better."

Then the king's men laughed loudly and cried out: "This looks like it's going to be a lot of fun. You'll surely want to wager with us that you've seen gold just as good as that? Then you must prove it. We'll stake seven marks of legal tender silver, and you your knife and your belt, and the king shall judge who is more in the right."

Gast replied: "It shall not come to that: to be challenged by you and not enter into the agreement you have proposed. Certainly I will wager with you and stake as much as you have said. But the king shall decide who is right." With that, they ended the conversation.

Toward evening, the guest took out his harp and played it beautifully and at length, so that everyone took pleasure in listening. Best of all, he played Gunther's harp piece. Finally, he sang the older song about Gudrun's schemes, which the people had never heard before. Thereupon the men slept through the night, and from then on there was peace among the table companions.

The king rose early in the morning and attended morning mass. After it ended, he went to table with his retinue. As he sat on his high seat, the group of guests approached him—Gast among them—and explained to him the entire arrangement and the wager they had made.

The king replied: "I care little for your wager, in which you are merely staking your money. I suspect rather that the drink has

clouded your judgment, and it seems wiser to me not to honor your wager—all the more so if it pleases Gast." But Gast replied: "I want our agreements to stand."

The king answered that it should be so: "But as for you, it seems to me that my men may have spoken more firmly this time than you have. That will soon become clear."

The men stepped back again. They continued drinking until the tables were cleared away, and the king sent for Gast and said to him: "Now you owe it to us to produce some gold, if you have any, so that I may settle your wager."

"Of course you may, lord!" said Gast, reaching for the pouch he carried with him, pulling a ball of thread from it, unwrapped it, and placed the contents in the king's hand.

The king saw that it was a fragment of a saddle buckle and immediately recognized that it was very fine gold. He asked for the ring Nietung to be brought, and when that was done, he held the buckle up against the ring and said: "Truly, this gold that Gast has brought seems to me to be the better of the two, and so it will seem to many others as well when they examine it closely."

And so most of the men agreed with the king. Thereupon, the king awarded the wager to Gast, while the others felt they had been unwise in their words this time.

Now Gast declared: "Keep your money, for I have no need of it whatsoever, and do not wager again with strangers, for you cannot possibly know whether you will encounter a man who has both seen and heard more than you! And I thank you, lord, for your judgment."

But the king said: "Now I would like you to tell me where you got the gold that you carry with you."

Gast replied: "I am reluctant to do so, for it must seem unbelievable to most people if I speak of it."

"Nevertheless, we wish to hear about it," said King Olaf, "and it works out well, since you've promised us a story anyway."

Gast replied: "If I tell you how I came by the gold, I suspect you'll want to hear other stories as well."

"That may well be," concluded the king. You've guessed right!"

"So I will now recount it," began Nornengast, "how I traveled south to Franconia, full of curiosity about the royal customs and the great fame that preceded Siegfried, as well as his beauty and physical strength. Nothing out of the ordinary happened there until I arrived in the country and met King Helferich.

"I had met him when I was still in Denmark with King Siegmund, the son of Wälse. King Helferich had a large retinue around him, and among them was Siegfried, the son of Siegmund of the Wälsung line and of Gerda, the daughter of Eugel, whom the sons of Hunding had slain. Sigmund, too, had fallen in battle against the sons of Hunding. Thus, Siegfried had lost both his father and his mother's father. His mother, Gerda, had married Half, the son of King Helferich, after King Siegmund's death.

"Thus, Siegfried and Siegmund's other sons grew up in their childhood with Helferich. They surpassed all men in stature and strength: Sinnfessel, the son of Siegmund and his twin sister Signe, whom Borghild—as became widely known—killed with poison, which is why Siegmund and Borghild parted ways again; then Helge, the son of Siegmund and Borghild, who slew King Hunding and was thereafter called Hunding-slayer, and Hamund, a third stepbrother. But Siegfried was nonetheless the foremost among them, and it is well known to all how Siegfried was the most commanding of all the army kings and the finest in the old way.

"Reigen, the son of Reidmar, had also come to King Helferich. He was more skilled than any other man, but a dwarf in stature, experienced, quick-tempered, and skilled in magic. Reigen taught Siegfried many things and loved him dearly. He told him of his

ancestors and of the wondrous events that had befallen them.

"After I had been there for a short time, I became Siegfried's retainer, as did many others. We all loved him dearly, for he was kind and gracious, and generous with gold toward us as well.

"One day we rode with Siegfried to Reigen's house, and Siegfried was warmly received. Then Reigen spoke these words:

> Behold, a swift lad has come,
> Siegmund's son, to our halls,
> He has greater courage than I, Graybeard,
> though I am old, I feel assured
> that help will still come to me
> from the Joyful One!

"And then he continued:

> I will care for him, the fiery wolf,
> Ingo's grandson, who now seeks a home with us;
> he shall be called the most noble under heaven;
> already he is weaving the bonds
> of his destiny across the land.

"Siegfried now remained with Reigen for good. Reigen told him much about Fafner—how he lay on the Lower Heath and how wonderfully large he had grown. Reigen forged for Siegfried the sword called Gram. It was so sharp that when he held it in the Rhine and let a flake of wool drift against it on the current, it split the flake just as it split the water. It was also with this sword that Siegfried split Reigen's anvil in two. When Reigen kept goading Siegfried again and again to slay his brother Fafner, Siegfried spoke these lines:

> The sons of Hunding would laugh aloud,
> those who brought about Siegmund's fate and end,
> if it were closer to my heart to obtain
> the golden rings than to avenge my father.

"Helge, meanwhile, had also fallen. He had indeed slain King Hunding and three of his sons—Eijolf, Herwart, and Schwertwart—but three other brothers, Heider, Half, and Hemming, had escaped. These were men of great skill in all arts and secrets. But Heider stood above his brothers. They had subdued many petty kings, slain many warriors, and burned many castles, and had accomplished much in the field of battle in Spain and in Franconia, for at that time the Empire had not yet extended northward beyond the high mountains. Thus, they had also subjugated the realm that Siegfried held in Franconia, and they were there with a large army.

"Now Siegfried set out on his campaign of vengeance, for he intended to march against the sons of Hunding. King Helferich lent him a large force and several warships. And it must be noted that Siegfried had assembled a large and well-armed force when he set out for the day of battle with Hunding's sons.

"Hamund, his stepbrother, and Reigen, the dwarf, set out on this campaign with Siegfried. I, too, was there, and at that time I was called Nornengast.

"Reigen took great pains to organize this army. He carried his self-forged sword, Schwirrer. Siegfried asked Reigen to lend me this sword; he did so, and thus I carried it. Reigen then asked Siegfried to kill Fafner if he returned safely from this voyage, and Siegfried promised him.

"As we sailed southward along the coast, a violent storm overtook us. We recognized this as the magical machinations of Hunding's sons and therefore sailed further inland. Then we saw a man standing on a mountain promontory. He was wrapped in a gray cloak, wore blue knee-length pants, and high-reaching shoes that extended beyond his thighs and held a leafy branch in his hand. The man walked toward us across the cliffs, uttered these words, and spoke:

Who rides forth from the steeds of the sea
through house-high waves and a churning sea?
The sails sweat with salty foam:
you can barely hold your course against the wind!

"Reigen answered him in kind.

Here we sail, Siegfried and I, upon the waves,
The storm wind still drives us toward certain death,
Already wild surf breaks steeply over the bow,
The floodwaters are falling! —
What is the name of the one who asks?

"The man in the cloak replied:

They call me Stößer; I feed the ravens
on every battlefield, you young Wälsung.
You may also call me
the Old Man of the Mountain,
Fulfiller and Many-form. —
Take me on your journey!

"So we steered toward land, and immediately the storm subsided. Siegfried invited the old man to come aboard. He did so. And now the weather suddenly changed, and we had the best of winds. The old man sat down at Siegfried's knees and behaved as one of his own kind. He asked whether Siegfried would be willing to accept any advice from him.

"Siegfried agreed and said that he assumed the old man must be quite skilled in giving counsel if he wished to bring benefit to people, and spoke these words:

Teach me this, Stößer, since you know so much
about the fate of gods and men.
If I go into battle, what sign promises me success
in the swing of my sword?

"Stößer replied:

> There are many favorable signs
> for the swing of the sword,
> if only the warrior knew them well:
> First, let the man confidently follow
> the raven's dark flight.
>
> There is another: Before setting out,
> you stand ready for the journey and the battle
> and you see two warriors, eager for glory,
> crossing paths in combat.
>
> This is the third thing I know:
> If you hear the wolf howling in the ash grove,
> and if it runs ahead of you through the forest,
> salvation and victory over heroes are granted to you.
>
> But great danger looms if your foot stumbles,
> before you have even reached the battle,
> confusing spirits will come to your side
> and seek to wound you.

"We sailed further south along Holstein and then east of Friesland, where we landed.

"Hunding's sons soon learned of our voyage and gathered an army. A large force was quickly assembled, and when the two armies met, a fierce battle. Though Heider was the foremost of his brothers in every attack, they all charged fiercely. But Siegfried stormed forward so unstoppably that everything gave way before him, for the sword Gram came dangerously close to them, inflicting wounds. Indeed, no one can deny Siegfried's courage! When he finally clashed with Heider, they exchanged many blows and fought with the utmost daring. Then silence fell over the battlefield, for everyone was watching this one-on-one duel. And a considerable time passed before either could land a blow on the

other, so skilled in combat were both, but the duel between Siegfried and Heider ended with Siegfried succeeding in capturing him and putting him in chains.

"Half and Hemming, Heider's brothers, now advanced fiercely, slaying many men, and some even fled. Then Hamund, Siegfried's stepbrother, turned against them, and I joined him. There was still considerable resistance, but when Siegfried rushed to our aid, the tide quickly turned. Half and Hemming, Hunding's sons, fell along with their entire band as darkness fell and night set in.

"As dawn broke, Stößer had vanished and was never seen again; but the people believed it had been Wotan himself.

"It was now decided how Heider should die. Reigen advised that the 'Blutaar' be carved into his back. And so it came to pass. Reigen demanded his sword Schwirrer back from me and used it to slit Heider's back open, severing his ribs from his spine and pulling his lungs out backward. Thus Heider died with great bravery.

"But Reigen spoke this alliterative verse:

> The Blutaar was now carved
> into his back with a biting sword,
> by Siegmund's murderer;
> never before has a braver warrior
> delighted the ravens with blood
> and reddened the earth!

"There was an immeasurable amount of spoils of war, a great wealth of armor and weapons. Siegfried's followers took it all for themselves, since he himself wanted none of it.

"Afterward, Siegfried slew the dragon Fafner and, finally, Reigen as well, because he sought to deceive him. Siegfried took the dragon's gold and rode away. From then on, he was called the Dragon-Slayer. He rode up the Hindinberg and found Brünhild there, and the fate of both of them unfolded as it is sung in the

Song of Siegfried, the Dragon-Slayer.

"Thereupon, Siegfried took Gudrun, the daughter of Gibich, as his wife and stayed there for a while with the Gibichs, his in-laws. I spent my time alternately with Siegfried or at home in northern Denmark. I had just returned to Siegfried when King Siegfried sent a message to the sons of Gundolf, his cousins, to the Gibichs, Gunther and Hagen, and demanded that they pay him tribute or face his military campaign. The Gibichs, however, resolved to defend their land.

"So the sons of Gundolf marked out a battlefield at the border with hazel stakes and returned home. The Gibichs, however, asked Siegfried, the dragon-slayer, to join them in this battle. He replied that it would be so.

"We sailed northward to Holstein and landed at a place called Eisenmund. There, not far from the harbor, the area where the battle was to take place had been marked off with hazel rods. Soon we saw many ships sailing from the north. These were the sons of Gundolf. Both armies then went ashore. King Siegfried Ring was not present himself, for he had to defend his land of Sweden against the Kuren and Kwänen, who were ravaging it at that time; moreover, he was already quite advanced in years.

"Now the two armies clashed. There was a fierce battle and heavy casualties. Gundolf's sons advanced fiercely, for they were taller and stronger than the other men. Among their ranks, one could still make out a particularly large man who struck down everything in his path—men, servants, and horses—so that nothing could withstand him; he resembled a giant more than a human being. King Gunther asked Siegfried to take on this monster, because, as he said, it might not end well otherwise.

"Siegfried now advanced against the giant, accompanied by a few men; most, however, were unwilling to join him. We soon caught up with the mighty fellow, and Siegfried asked his name and where he was from. He replied that his name was Starkmann,

son of Großtat, and that he came from Fenring in Norway, in the north.

"Siegfried replied, he had certainly heard his name mentioned, though mostly in a bad light: 'One shouldn't hold back on unfriendliness toward such fellows.'

"Starkmann retorted, 'Who is this man who insults me so harshly with his words?'

"Siegfried gave his name. Starkmann asked, 'Are you the one known as the Dragon Slayer?'

"'Thats right!' replied Siegfried. Then Starkmann tried to run away, but Siegfried set after him without delay, swinging his sword Gram into the air and smashing his jaw with the pommel, so that two molars broke out; and that was a maiming blow! Siegfried now ordered the scoundrel to leave at once. And Starkmann hurried away.

"A short time later, we already heard tales of Starkmann's murderous envy, how he had slain King Armund in the bath. But I picked up one of the molars and carried it with me for a long time. Now it hangs from the bell rope in Lund, Denmark, and weighs seven ounces. People find it quite remarkable to see there.

"After Starkmann's flight, however, the sons of Gundolf also fled, and we made a mighty haul. Siegfried and the Gibichs then rode home to their kingdom and lived there in peace.

"One day, as Siegfried was riding to a gathering, he came upon marshy ground, and his stallion Graue leaped so that the saddle girth tore to pieces and the clasp fell off. I saw it glinting in the mud, picked it up, and brought it to Siegfried. But he gave it to me as a gift. You have recently seen this very gold. Siegfried dismounted from his stallion, and I groomed the animal and washed the mud off him. While doing so, I pulled a tuft of hair from his tail as a sign of his magnificent stature." With that, Gast held up a tuft of horsehair that was seven ells long.

King Olaf spoke. “Your tales bring me great joy.” And everyone praised his stories as well as his manliness. The king wanted him to recount even more of the events from his travels, and Gast told them many more inspiring stories until late into the evening. Then the men went to sleep. The next morning, the king had him summoned again. He wanted to know even more about Gast and thus addressed him: “I cannot quite make sense of your age and how it is possible that you are such an old man as to have been a witness to those times. You will have to tell us more so that we may better understand such circumstances.”

Gast replied: “I knew in advance that you would want to hear more when I told you about the gold and how it was connected to all this.”

The king said, “Certainly. And that is why you must tell us.”

“There is still more to tell,” Gast began, “that I traveled north to Denmark and took possession of my father’s inheritance, for my father had died young. Shortly thereafter, I learned of the death of Siegfried, as well as later of the Gibichs, and that struck me as dreadful news.”

The king asked: “But how did Siegfried come to his death?”

Gast replied: “Most people say that Guntwurm, son of Gibich, slew him with his sword, while he was sleeping on Gudrun’s bed; the Germans, on the other hand, report that Siegfried was slain out in the forest, and in the song of Gudrun’s lament it is said that Siegfried and the Gibichsons rode to a gathering, and there they slew him; but everyone says that they slew him while he lay there, unsuspecting, and betrayed his trust.”

One of the retainers asked, “And how did Brünhild meet her end?”

Gast replied: “Brünhild killed her servants and five maids; then she pierced herself with her sword and ordered that she and her people be driven to the pyre and their bodies be burned.

"And so it came to pass that one pyre was built for her and a second for Siegfried. But Siegfried was burned before Brünhild. Brünhild was driven to the pyre on a cart adorned with velvet and purple, and everything with gold. Then she, too, was burned."

The men now asked Gast whether Brünhild, even in death, had truly spoken as she was being driven to the pyre. Gast assured them that it was true. Then they asked him repeat the words if he could.

Gast replied: "As Brünhild was being driven along the Helweg to the pyre, they came near some rocks where a giantess dwelt. She stood outside the cave's entrance. She wore a fur cloak and her face was black. In her hand she held a burning forest log and said: 'I will add this to your pyre, Brünhild. But it would have been better if you had been burned alive for your misdeeds, above all for letting Siegfried, the dragon-slayer, be murdered—that incomparable man who has often crossed my path. For that reason, I will sing to you with such words of vengeance that you will become even more detestable to all who hear such things said of you.' Thus sang the giantess to Brünhild:

> Here you shall now stand
> and never flee from me
> Through this enclosure of stony walls!
> For it would have been better
> for you to weave ornaments
> Than to haunt another woman's husband.
> What else drives you so fiercely down from above,
> You all-desiring head, to Hel?
> Often enough, woman—you refuse to hear—
> had men's blood washed from you by maidens' hands;
> yet you, Brünhild, daughter of Botlung,
> were always born to bring ruin to others;
> Gibich's sons have perished,
> their entire lineage destroyed by you!

"But Brünhild replied:

Do not reproach me for that, you woman of stone!
And even if I have ridden to the battlefield before,
I shall always remain the better of the two,
Wherever those born of men know us.

This I will tell you from upon the chariot,
The way of the unwise: Do you wish to know,
How first the treachery of Gibich's heirs
Robbed me of love and led me to my crime?
Hilde in the helmet, that's what everyone called me,
the one I had to choose from the turmoil of battle.

Know this: winter had counted but twelve,
when I once sent Helmgunter—
the old man of Gothic descent—down to Hella,
And Agnar, the younger opponent, was granted victory—
but that was not according to Walvater's will.
So he had shields close the ring around me,
with red and white ones, edge to edge. —

But around the southern hall the fires blazed—
decisive, the one who would rouse me from my slumber,
the one who had so far proved fearless among them all.
He promised the hero to ride across,
who carried the gold upon which Fafner once lay.
And Siegfried, the Lord of Gold, rode forth on Graue,
the German Viking, in the retinue of suitors,
and he alone seemed to me the best of them all.

An innocent bed sheltered us both there,
As if he had been born to me as a brother,
And neither of us could, through eight long nights,
Lay an arm around the other's arm,
And yet Gudrun, the daughter of Gibich,

that I had slept in Siegfried's arms.
Then I realized—and it could not have been better—
how early I had already been deceived
on the journey to my bride.

Yet women and men will still be called into life
for a long time to come to suffer,
but I now wish to bring my fate to a close
together with Siegfried; therefore, giantess, sink!

"Then the giantess screamed with a terrible voice and sank into the mountain."

With that, Gast fell silent. But the courtiers called out to him. "That delights us greatly. Tell us more!"

The king, however, replied: "It is not necessary to tell any more such things." And he turned to Gast. "Were you also with the sons of Ragnar Shaggy-Breeches?"

Gast replied: "I was there only a short time. I joined them when they were encamped in the south before the Alps and laid waste to Vifilsburg. At that time, everyone was in terror of them, for they were victorious wherever they went; indeed, they were planning to march on Rome at that time.

"One day, a man came to King Bear Iron-Side, the second son of Ragnar Shaggy-Breeches, and greeted him. The king welcomed him warmly and asked him where he was coming from and what his name was.

"The man replied that his name was Sühning and that he had come from Rome. King Bear Ironside asked, 'How far is it from here?'

"Sühning replied, 'You can tell by these shoes I'm wearing on my feet, O King.' With that, he took off his iron shoes. The shoes were still quite thick at the top, but heavily worn down at the bottom. 'That is how far the journey is from here to Rome,' he

said, ‘as you can see from my shoes. So much they have suffered.’

“But the king replied: ‘That is a wonderfully long journey to undertake; let us rather turn back and not venture into the Roman Empire.’

“And so the brothers did just that and did not continue on. Many found it surprising that they would change their minds based on one man’s word, since they had already made a firm resolution beforehand. The sons of Ragnar Shaggy-Breeches set out for home in the north and no longer campaigned in the south.”

King Olaf said: “It is clear that the holy men in Rome did not want them to pass through there, and that the messenger was sent by God, for their resolve changed so quickly and they did not carry out their work of destruction in the most holy city of Rome.

“Now tell me,” the king said, turning to the guest, “with which kings did you find yourself most at ease?”

Gast replied: “I found the greatest joy with Siegfried and the Gibichs; with the Shaggy-Breeches’ sons, everyone could do as he pleased, just as he wished; with King Erich in Uppsala, I found the greatest comfort, but King Harold Fairhair was the strictest in courtly manners among all these princes. I was also with King Ludwig in Germany, and there I was marked with the cross, because I could not have conducted myself otherwise, for Christianity was firmly established there. On the whole, it seemed to me to be quite good there.”

The king spoke. “There is much more you could tell us, if we were to ask about it.” — And he inquired about many things, and Gast explained everything to him in detail.

Finally, Gast said: “Now I can also tell you why I am called the Nornengast.”

The king replied that he would very much like to hear that. Gast then began to tell his story. “It was when I was growing up at my father’s estate in Gröningen. My father was wealthy and

practiced generous hospitality. At that time, wise women traveled through the land; they were called seers and foretold people's fates. Many people invited them into their homes, offered them hospitality, and gave them gifts upon their departure. My father did the same. Once, such women came with a group of travelers and were to foretell my destiny.

"I was lying in my cradle when they were to speak on my behalf. A candle burned above me. They spoke many good things about me and said I would become a very fortunate person, even more so than my ancestors and the chiefs' sons in the land. Everything would turn out according to my wishes. The youngest of the Norns felt she was held in too low esteem by the two older ones, for she was not asked for her predictions, since those two seemed more worthy. There was also all manner of rabble among the crowd. This knocked her from her chair and threw her to the ground, which made her exceedingly angry; she screamed loudly and agitatedly and ordered those with their such good promises about me:

"For," she cried, "I decree that the child shall not live longer than the candle that is lit above him burns." Quickly, the eldest of the seers seized the candle, extinguished it, and commanded my mother to keep it safe, so that it should not be lit until the very last days of my life.

"The wise women then set off on their way again, bound the young Norn, and led her away with them. My father gave them rich gifts for the journey. But when I was a grown man, my mother entrusted the candle to my care. I have it here with me."

The king then asked: "And what brought you here to us?"

Gast replied: "It just occurred to me that some good fortune might come to me from you, because I have heard much praise of you from good and wise men."

The king asked: "Do you now wish to be baptized?"

Gast replied: “I will do so on your advice.”

And so it came to pass. The king befriended him and took him into his retinue. The guest became a man of great faith and observed the king’s ways; he was also well-liked among the men.

One day it happened that the king said to Gast: “How long would you wish to live, if you could decide?”

Gast replied: “Only a short while longer, if God wills it.”

Then the king asked, “How long do you think it would last if you were to take the candle you spoke of right now?”

Gast took the candle from his harp frame. The king ordered it to be lit, which was done. Once lit, it burned down quickly.

Now the king asked, “How old are you?”

Gast replied, “I am now three hundred winters old.”

“You are very old!” said the king.

Gast then lay down and asked to be anointed. The king had this and, once it was done, only a little of the candle remained unburned. Now everyone felt that Gast’s time had come. And these two events occurred simultaneously: the candle burned down, and Gast passed away. But everyone found his passing remarkable.

The king reflected on the significant omens in his words, and it seemed that what he had said was coming true in the course of his life.

THE CHOSEN SONS OF WOTAN

Here the tale begins and tells of the man named Siege, who was said to be a son of Wotan. His foster father, named Schatte, is also mentioned in connection with this story; he was a mighty and great man. Nevertheless, Siege was the mightier of the two, for he was of nobler lineage, according to the talk of the people in those days. Schatte had a servant who is briefly mentioned in this tale; his name was Brede. He proved himself capable in everything he had to do and possessed qualities and skills equal to those who considered themselves more distinguished—indeed, perhaps even more so than many of them.

It must now be told that Siege once went out hunting, accompanied by Schatte's servant, and they hunted game all day until evening. When they gathered their prey in the evening, Brede had hunted far more and better game than Siege. This displeased him greatly, and he said he was surprised that a servant should surpass him in the hunt.

Brede replied, "This servant seems to be doing just fine!"

Then Siege charged at him and killed him. He then buried the body under a snowdrift.

He returned home that evening and claimed that Brede had been riding in the forest with him: "and he suddenly vanished from my sight, and I know nothing more of him."

Schatte did not trust Siege's account and believed it was a ruse on his part and that Siege must have killed him. He sent men to search for Brede, and the result of their search was that they found him under a snowdrift. Schatte said that this snowdrift should henceforth be called Bredes Schneewehe from then on, and people have held to this ever since, calling every large snowdrift by that name.

It thus came to pass that Siege had slain and murdered the servant, and they called him "Wolf in the Sanctuary." He could no longer remain at home with his foster father.

Wotan therefore led Siege out of the country, on such a long journey that it was a great ordeal, and he did not let him go until he had provided him with warships. Siege then began to embark on military campaigns with the crew his foster father had entrusted to him before they parted ways, and he was victorious in his expeditions. And so his cause prospered that he eventually secured land and dominion for himself. Thereupon he took a woman of noble birth and became a great and powerful king among his peers; he ruled over Heunenland and was a formidable warrior.

He fathered a son with his wife named Lenz. The boy grew up with him and soon became tall and well-built. Siege had now grown old and had alienated many men, so that in the end those who plotted against him—those he trusted most—and these were his wife's brothers. They ambushed him when he least expected it and had few men around him; they overwhelmed him with superior force, and in that battle Siege fell along with all his men.

His son Lenz had not been caught up in this peril. His friends and the provincial governors provided him with such a large army that he was able to take control of both the lands and the kingdom from his father, Siege. And now that he believed he had gained a firm footing in his realm, he recalled the affairs involving his maternal uncles, who had slain his father; he gathered a large army around him and marched with this army against his blood relatives, and it seemed to him that they had given him sufficient cause to disregard their kinship.

And so he did: he did not let up until he had slain all the murderers of his father, however unjust that might seem to any observer. He then appropriated land, dominion, and estates for himself and thus became even more powerful than his father. He also took great spoils of war and took a wife whom he deemed worthy of him.

They had lived together for a long time, but had produced neither a son nor a daughter. This distressed them greatly, and they prayed to the gods with great fervor that they might grant them a

child. It is said that Fricka granted their request, and so did Wotan, granting what they asked of him. Wotan was not lacking in wise counsel; he summoned his wish-maiden Stille, the daughter of the giant Reifner, gave her an apple, and commanded her to bring it to King Lenz. Stille took the apple, transformed herself into the form of a crow, and flew until she reached the spot where King Lenz was sitting on a hill. She let the apple fall into his lap. He took the apple and thought he knew what it meant. He then left the hill and went home to his men, sought out the queen, and she ate some of the apple.

Now the story goes that the queen soon realized she was with child; but the time dragged on, and she could not give birth to the child. Then it came to pass that Lenz was to set out on a military campaign to bring peace to his land, as is the custom of kings. On this journey, however, King Lenz fell ill and died shortly thereafter. He thought of returning to Wotan—a prospect that many found desirable in those days.

The queen's inability to give birth to the child persisted, and she suffered this affliction for six months. Then she realized she would not live much longer and ordered that the child be cut from her womb. And so it was done as she commanded.

The child was a boy, and this boy, as might be expected, had grown very large by the time he emerged. It is said that the boy kissed his mother before she died. The boy was given a name and was called Wäls or Wälse, which means "the True One." He then became king of Heunenland after his father. From an early age, he was tall and strong and quick to make decisions in all matters concerning manliness and a readiness for battle. He became a formidable warrior and victorious in all the battles which he fought on his military campaigns.

When Wälse had grown to manhood, Reifner sent his daughter Stille—who was mentioned earlier when she flew with the apple to Lenz, Wälse's father. He went to meet her and took her as his wife, and they lived together in harmony for many years.

They had ten sons and one daughter. Their eldest son was named Siegmund, and their daughter Siegne; these two were twins and King Wälse's most outstanding and promising children in every respect, yet the others, too, all showed great promise, as has long been known and widely praised that the Wälsungs were exceedingly warlike and powerful men. They surpassed most of the men remembered in ancient legends, both in wisdom and the arts and in zealous endeavor of every kind.

It is said that King Wälse had his famous hall built at that time, in such a way that a mighty oak stood within the hall. Its branches, with fresh foliage, extended beyond the roof of the hall, while the trunk was rooted within the hall. They called this tree the "Child's Trunk."

A king named Sieggeier ruled over Gotland; he was powerful and had a large population. He traveled to meet King Wälse and asked for Siegne's hand in marriage. The king welcomed this proposal, as did his sons. Only Siegne herself was not very inclined to agree, but she left it to her father to decide, as he did with everything concerning her. The king thought it wise to give her away, and she was betrothed to King Sieggeier. And once this wedding and marriage were held and consummated, King Sieggeier was to visit King Wälse for a banquet.

King Wälse arranged the wedding to the best of his ability, and when everything was fully prepared, the kings and King Sieggeier arrived there. He had many esteemed men in his company. Mighty fires had been lit all along the length of the hall. But the great tree, which had been mentioned earlier, stood in the middle of the hall. Now it must be told that, as the guests sat by the fires that evening, a man entered the hall. This man was unknown to them, and he was dressed as follows: he wore a spotted cloak, went barefoot, and wore linen trousers tied at the ankles and a low-sitting hat on his head; he was very tall, elderly, and one-eyed. This man held a sword in his hand, stepped toward the children's log, swung the sword, and thrust it into the log so that it penetrated all the way to

the hilt. But all the men were struck dumb in the presence of this man.

Then he spoke and said: "Whoever draws this sword from the trunk shall receive it from me as a gift, and he will then find for himself that he has never held a better sword in carried than this one."

With that, the old man left the hall, and no one knew who he was or where he was going.

Now the men leaped to their feet, and none wanted to let another take the sword; each thought he would be the best at it if he were the first to try. But first the more distinguished men stepped forward, and then all the others. Yet none succeeded, for the sword did not budge in the least when they pulled at it. Finally, Siegmund, the son of King Wälse, seized the sword and drew it from the tree trunk, and it was as if it lay loosely before him. This weapon seemed so fine to everyone that no one thought they had ever seen a sword as good as this one.

King Sieggeier offered him to pay him three times its weight in gold for the sword. But Siegmund replied: "You could have taken this sword just as easily as I did, right where it was stuck, if it had suited you to carry it; but now you will never have it, even if you offered all the gold you possess."

Sieggeier was enraged by these words, for they seemed to him to be a haughty reply. Since he was, by nature, a treacherous man, he pretended not to take these words to heart. But that very evening he was already plotting his revenge, which he would later carry out.

It should also be noted that Sieggeier went to bed with Siegne that evening. The next day the weather was fine, and Sieggeier declared that he wanted to sail home and would not wait until the wind picked up or the sea become unnavigable. There is no record of King Wälse or his sons trying to dissuade him, especially since they saw that he wanted nothing more than to leave the banquet.

Siegne, however, said to her father: "I do not wish to sail away with Sieggeier, nor can my heart bring itself to smile at him, and I know through a premonition, rooted in our clan's inherited nature, that great sorrow will arise from this marriage will bring us great sorrow if this union is not broken off at once."

"You must not speak thus, daughter," said Siegmund, "for it would be a great disgrace to both sides—to Sieggeier and to us—to break the union without cause; nor would we gain either friendship or loyalty from him if we did so, and he would repay us with ill will to the best of his ability. It befits us to keep this on our part.

King Sieggeier prepared for his journey home. But before he left the banquet, he invited King Wälse, his father-in-law, and his sons to visit him in Gotland within three months, along with whatever retinue he wished to bring and deemed befitting his honor.

In this way, he wished to make up for the wedding festivities, since he could not stay longer than one night, though it was not otherwise the custom of the people to proceed in this manner.

Now King Wälse promised him the journey and to come on the appointed day. Thus the in-laws parted, and King Sieggeier sailed home with his wife.

It should also be noted that King Wälse and his sons set out at the agreed-upon time to accept of their brother-in-law. They set sail from shore in three well-equipped ships and had a very smooth crossing; they reached Gotland by ship when it was already late in the evening.

That same evening, Siegne came to the ships and asked her father and brothers for a private conversation. She reported on her husband's intentions, saying that he had assembled an invincible army and intended to destroy him. "Now I beg you," she continued, "return to your kingdom and gather as many people as possible. Then return and take your revenge. But do not put

yourselves in this danger, for you will never escape his treachery unless you resort to the stratagem I offer you.

Then King Wälse replied: "All the people will speak of how, even before I was born, I spoke those words and swore the oath that I would never flee, neither from iron nor from fire out of fear, and so I have done thus far. Should I not continue to do so even in my old age? And may maidens never reproach my sons—not even in jest—that they feared death, for everyone must die someday, and no one can escape the fact that they will die one day. Therefore, my counsel is that we should by no means flee, but use our hands with the utmost fearlessness. I have fought a hundred battles, have had sometimes more, sometimes fewer men, and yet have always emerged victorious. Let it never be heard that I fled or begged for peace."

Then Siegne wept bitterly and begged not to have to return to King Sieggeier.

But King Wälse said: "Truly, you shall go home to your husband and remain with him, come what may!"

Siegne went home; but they spent the night on the ships.

But early the next morning, King Wälse ordered his men to rise, went ashore with them and prepared for battle. Soon they all stood on the shore in full armor, and they did not have to wait long until King Sieggeier arrived with his entire army and engaged them in the fiercest battle. King Wälse now spurred his men on to the wildest assault, and it is said that he and his sons broke through the enemy's battle lines eight times that day, striking left and right. But just as they were about to do so again, King Wälse fell, and all his men with him—except for his ten sons. They were taken captive, bound, and led away.

Siegne learned that her father had fallen, but that her brothers had been taken captive and sentenced to death. So she summoned King Sieggeier for a conversation and said to him: "Therefore I beg you not to have my brothers killed so quickly. Let them rather be

put in stocks. Now it is true, as they say: 'The eye rejoices as long as it sees!' I ask for nothing more for them, because I know it would do me no good."

Sieggeier replied: "You are deluded and without sense, that you ask for a greater evil for your brothers than being slain. Yet this shall be granted to you. It seems all the better to me if they endure worse suffering and face longer torment before death."

He then had it done as she asked. A mighty tree trunk was taken from a spot in the forest, split down the middle, and pierced with holes. Their feet were placed into these holes were placed into these holes, and the ten brothers were thus strapped into the heavy log. There they sat all day and into the night. But around midnight an old she-wolf crept out of the forest to where they lay in the log. She was large and ugly. Her first act was to bite one of the brothers to death and devour him entirely. Then she slipped away.

The next morning, Siegne sent the man she trusted most to her brothers to find out how they were faring. He returned and told her that one of them was dead. It seemed impossible to her that this could happen to all of them without her being able to help them. To make a long story short, for nine nights in a row, the old she-wolf came at midnight and took one of the brothers, until they were all dead, except for one who remained: Siegmund.

Before the tenth night began, Siegne sent her trusted servant to Siegmund, her twin brother, gave him honey to take with him, and told him to smear it on Siegmund's face and put some in his mouth as well. He went to Siegmund, did as he was told, and returned. The she-wolf came that night as was her custom and now intended to bite Siegmund to death just as she had his brothers. She caught his scent where he had been smeared with honey, licked his entire face with her tongue, and finally stuck her tongue into his mouth as well. Siegmund did not lose heart and bit the she-wolf's tongue with all his might. She pulled back violently, tugged mightily at herself, and thrust her feet so hard against the log that it split wide open, but he held on so tightly that the she-wolf's tongue was torn

off at the root.

The stake was now broken, and Siegmund had been set free. The next morning, Siegne sent for him to find out how he was faring and whether he was still alive.

Siegmund, however, was staying nearby in the forest, and when the messenger arrived, he told him the whole story of what had transpired. The messenger then turned back and reported to Siegne how things stood.

Siegne now went out herself to meet her brother, and they decided that he should build himself an earthen hut deep in the forest. For a long time, things went well, with Siegne hiding him there and providing him with everything he needed to live. King Sieggeier, however, believed that all the Wälsungs were now dead.

Sieggeier had two sons with Siegne, his wife. It is said of the older son that Siegne sent him to her brother Siegmund when he was ten years old, so that he might come to his aid should Siegmund ever attempt to avenge his father. The boy went into the forest and arrived at the earthen hut late in the evening. Siegmund welcomed him warmly, as was only natural, and told him to start by baking some bread—I'll go look for firewood in the meantime—and handed him a bag of flour. Then he went off to gather wood. But when he returned, the boy had not yet prepared anything for baking bread.

Siegmund asked if the bread was ready.

He replied: "I didn't dare touch the sack of flour, because there was something alive in the flour."

Then Siegmund believed he knew that this boy was not the sort he could keep with him. And when the twins saw each other again shortly thereafter, Siegmund explained to his sister that he did not yet feel any closer to a man, even if the boy were with him.

Siegne replied, "Then take him and kill him; he need not live any longer!" And so Siegmund did.

That summer passed, and the following winter, Siegne sent her second son to Siegmund, but there is no need to prolong this story: it came to the same result; he killed this boy as well, on Siegne's advice.

It is said that one day, as Siegne sat in her women's quarters, a wise woman entered who was extremely knowledgeable in secrets and magic.

Siegne said to her, "I wish we could switch places." She replied, "You can decide that."

And through her sorcery, she managed to bring about a switch of their forms.

The woman then took her place at Siegne's command and also lay down in bed with the king that evening, and he did not realize that it was not Siegne with him.

As for Siegne, she went to her brother's cottage and, without revealing her identity, asked him to grant her lodging for the night: "For I have lost my way here in the forest and do not know where I am."

He replied that she could stay with him; he would not refuse lodging to a lone woman, and he also thought he knew that she would not repay his kind hospitality by revealing anything about him. She stayed with him for the night, and they sat down to eat.

He often found himself look at her, for she seemed to him a beautiful and graceful woman. When they had eaten their fill, he said to her that he would like them to share a bed that night. She did not object, and he lay with her for three nights in a row.

Siegne then returned home, met the wise woman, and asked her to change their forms back, which she did.

When the time had passed, Siegne gave birth to a boy who was named Sinnfessel. He grew up to be both tall and strong and handsome in appearance, and became just like the Wälsung clan.

He was not yet quite ten winters old when Siegne sent him to Siegmund's earthen hut. Before they came to Siegmund, she had tried with her sons, including Sieggeier, to sew their coats to the sleeves with skin and flesh. They had found this hard to bear and had cried out in pain. So she did the same to Sinnfessel, but he did not flinch. Then she pulled the coat off him again, so that the skin clung to the sleeve, and said that he must surely feel pain.

He replied, however: "Such pain must seem trivial to a Wälsung."

When the boy arrived, Siegmund ordered him to knead the dough as well; but he wanted to go look for firewood for them. With that, he placed the bag in the boy's hand and went into the forest. And when he returned this time, Sinnfessel had already finished baking.

Siegmund asked if he had found anything in the flour.

"It already seemed to me," he replied, "as if something alive had been in the flour at first, when I began to knead; in any case, I kneaded whatever was in there."

Then Siegmund spoke, laughing as he did so: "I don't think you'll want to eat any of this bread tonight, for you've kneaded a large poisonous viper into it."

Siegmund was so strong and pure that he could eat poison without it harming him; Sinnfessel could only withstand it if the poison came to him from the outside, but he could not withstand it if it was eaten or drunk.

To Siegmund, however, Sinnfessel still seemed too young for revenge, and he wanted to accustom him to it first through a few daring deeds. In the summer they roamed far through the forests and slew men for the sake of plunder. Siegmund certainly recognized Sinnfessel as being entirely in the nature of the Wälsungs, but since he believed him to be a son of Sieggeier, he feared the boy might have inherited some of his father's

wickedness, along with the Wälsungs' thirst for battle. Yet he soon noticed that Sinnfessel did not care much for his paternal lineage, for he often reminded Siegmund of his suffering and goaded him strongly to kill King Sieggeier.

When Sinnfessel had grown up, Siegmund felt he had tested him sufficiently. It was not long before Siegmund sought to avenge his father's death. And as soon as the time seemed right, they set out one day from the earthen hut. Late in the evening, they reached King Sieggeier's court, crept into the vestibule of the hall, and hid there behind the ale kettles. The queen sensed that they had come, searched them, and when she found the two of them, they decided to carry out their revenge as soon as night fell.

Siegne and the king had another younger son, who was playing with gold rings at that very moment. He let them roll across the floor of the hall and ran after them. But one gold ring bounced out of the hall into the vestibule, where the two avengers were hiding. When the boy ran after it to look for his ring , he saw the two men, tall and grim, with their low-set helmets and gleaming armor. So he ran back into the hall to his father and told him what he had seen. The king immediately suspected a plot against him.

Siegne heard what the boy said, took him by the hand, and led him out into the vestibule to Siegmund and Sinnfessel, saying, they should know who had betrayed them: "—and I advise you to kill him." Siegmund replied: "I will not kill your child, even if he had betrayed me."

But Sinnfessel did not hesitate: He swung his sword, slaying the boy and throwing him into the hall at Sieggeier's feet. Sieggeier leaped to his feet and ordered his men to seize the two men. But they defended themselves bravely and valiantly, and each thought he was in the greatest danger as long as he stood closest to them. Finally, however, they were overcome by superior numbers, captured, bound, and put in chains. And so they lay they lay there all night.

The king now pondered to himself what kind of death he should have them suffer—one that would also be the slowest. And when morning came, the king had a massive burial mound built out of stones and peat sods. Then, in the center of the mound, a long and wide slab of rock was erected with its edges pointing up and down, large enough that it abutted the top of the mound all around, thus dividing the space into two halves with no connection between them.

Now he had Siegmund and Sinnfessel seized and placed them inside the mound, one on each side of the stone slab, because he thought it would be worse if they were not together yet one could still hear the other.

They were already in the process of covering the mound with pieces of turf when Siegne arrived; she carried a bundle of straw in her arms, threw it through an opening in the mound that was still open toward Sinnfessel, and asked the men to give it to the king. They agreed, and the mound was then sealed shut.

Night fell. Then Sinnfessel said to Siegmund: "I don't think we'll run out of food anytime soon; Siegne threw some bacon into the mound for us, wrapped in the straw."

He felt the bacon again and found that Siegmund's sword had been thrust into the back; it was indeed dark inside the hill, but he recognized it by the hilt and told Siegmund. Now Sinnfessel pushed the sword over the upper edge of the rock slab and then pulled it back firmly. The sword cut into the stone. Siegmund now grasped the tip of the sword from the other side, and together they sawed the rock slab right through, not letting go until they had as the song says:

> They sawed with might through the mighty rock
> Sinnfessel, Siegmund with his cutting sword!

Now they were together and set to work, continuing to saw through stones and turf until they emerged from the burial mound. They hurried to the royal hall. There, everyone lay asleep. They

then dragged wood to the hall and set it ablaze. Soon those inside awoke from the smoke and from the fact that the hall was already burning above them.

The king asked who had started the fire. Then Siegmund cried out: "Here we are, Sinnfessel, my sister's son and I, and we now think you should feel that we Wälsungs are not all dead!"

Then he asked his sister to come out and receive all his heartfelt devotion and high honor as atonement for his husband's sins: he wanted to make up for all the harm he had caused her.

But she replied: "Now you shall learn, how I have held the murder of the Wälsungs against King Sieggeier: I had his sons and my own sons murdered because they seemed too sluggish to me in avenging their father, and it was I who came to you in the forest in the guise of a fortune-teller, and Sinnfessel is the son of both of us. That is why he possesses such formidable fighting spirit—because he is both the son's son and the daughter's son of King Wälse. I have struggled with all my might to ensure that Sieggeier would meet his death; I have fought so fiercely for vengeance to be served that I have no way left to go on living, and now I am willing to die with him, even though I belonged to him only under duress."

Then she kissed Siegmund, her brother, and Sinnfessel, her son, wished them well, and went back into the fire. Thus she met her death alongside King Sieggeier and his entire retinue.

Father and son now gathered a crew and ships, and Siegmund set sail for his ancestral lands, driving out the king who had established himself there.

Siegmund became a powerful and highly honored king, wise and magnanimous. He took a wife named Borghilde. With her, he fathered two sons; the first was named Helge, the other Hamund. When Helge was born, the Norns came and prophesied his fate, saying he would become the most illustrious of all kings.

Siegmund had just returned from a battle at that time; he went

out to meet his son with a noble procession, gave him the name Helge—which means "Consecrated"—and, to confirm the name, bestowed upon him the lands of Ringstatt and Sonnenberg, along with a sword; he wished him well and hoped he would defeat the Wölsungs.

And Helge indeed grew up to be magnanimous and happy among his friends, surpassing most men in every skill. He undertook his first military campaign when he was fifteen years old and was king over the army, as was Sinnfessel, and both led the forces.

On this campaign, it is reported, Helge encountered the king named Hunding, a mighty king with a vast realm who ruled over many lands. He engaged him in a field battle in which Helge advanced fiercely. The battle ended with Helge emerging victorious and King Hunding falling along with a large portion of his army.

Helge felt he had grown in status, having slain such a prominent king. But Hunding's sons now raised an army against him to avenge their father. A fierce battle ensued, but Helge broke through the brothers' battle lines, advanced to their standards, slaying Hunding's sons Half, Eyolf, Herwart, and Hagbard, and thus achieving a complete victory.

When Helge emerged from this battle, he encountered a group of women of regal appearance at the edge of a forest. They rode in rich garments. Yet one stood out from the rest, riding ahead of the others. Helge asked her her name.

She called herself Siegrun and said that she was King Hagen's daughter. Helge said, "Ride home with us, and you are welcome."

The king's daughter replied, "We have other matters to attend to than drinking with you."

Helge asked, "And what is that, princess?"

She replied, "King Hagen, my father, has betrothed me to

Hadubrand, the son of King Graurossen; but I have vowed not to love him any more than a crow. Nevertheless, it will come to pass —unless you prevent it and march out to meet him with an army and take me away to be with you, for there is no king with whom I would rather live under one roof than with you!

"Take heart, Princess," said Helge, "first we will test our strength before you are given to Hadubrand, and we will find out which of us prevails—and I will stake my life on it."

Immediately, Helge sent men with precious gifts to recruit an army and summoned all the people to the Red Mountains. There Helge encamped until a great host from Hiddensee joined him. Many people also sailed in from the Öresund in beautiful and sturdy ships. King Helge summoned the helmsman of his ship, named Leib, and asked him if he had already counted the entire army.

He replied: "It is not easy to count, my lord. On the ships ships coming from the Öresund, there are probably twelve thousand men, but the squadron from Hiddensee is half as large again."

Now King Helge ordered the fleet to set course for Schwerin Bay, and so it was done. But soon a storm so violent arose and the sea grew so rough that when the waves crashed over the side, it sounded as if mountains were crashing crashing into one another. Helge told them not to be afraid and not to lower the sails, but rather to set them even higher than before. It was then a close call; the sea nearly swept over them before they reached land.

Then Siegrun, King Hagen's daughter, came out to meet the ships with a large retinue and directed them to the safe harbor known as Kummerland.

The inhabitants, however, had spotted the ships' arrival, and Guntmund, a brother of Hadubrand who ruled over the district of Schwerinsberg, rode down from the mainland to the coast. He called out to the ships and asked who was leading this great army.

Sinnfessel stood at the bow. He wore a helmet on his head, gleaming like glass, and a coat of mail, white as snow, a spear in his hand, with a fluttering pennant and a gold-edged shield before him.

He certainly knew how to speak to kings, and so he began: "Say this when you have fed the pigs and the dogs and return to your wife: The Wälsungs have come, and King Helge will be found before his army, should Hadubrand seeks him out. And it is a joy to fight for glory while you kiss the maidens by the fire!"

Guntmund replied: "You do not even know the slightest bit of how to speak properly or recount past deeds, since you lie about those of noble birth. It is certainly truer that you fed on wolf meat out there in the forest and slaughtered your brothers, and it is astonishing that you dare to go to war with blameless men, from whose corpses you have already sucked blood!"

Sinnfessel cried out in response: "You will recall only reluctantly how you were a sibyl and cried out for a man, and how you chose me for this task; later you were a desirable maiden in Asgard, and it was almost like all the Einheerer would have fought for your sake; even more: I made nine young wolves your lovers—I was a father to them all."

Guntmund spoke: "You can tell many lies! But it seems to me that you could no longer be anyone's father since you were castrated by the giantesses at Thorskapp! You are King Sieggeier's stepson, and you lay out in the forest with the wolves, and you heaped every shameful deed upon yourself all at once: you slew your brothers and made yourself infamous!"

Sinnfessel replied: "Do you still remember how you were the mare of the stallion Graue, and I broke you in at Brawald? Finally, you were still a shepherd for the giant Brüller."

But Guntmund cried out: "I'd rather feed the birds with his corpse tonight than argue with you any longer!"

Then King Helge said, "It would be better and wiser for you to fight than to speak such words, which are a disgrace even to hear! And even if the sons of Graurossen are not my friends, they are nonetheless men of high spirit."

Guntmund then rode back up to Sonnenfeld to King Hadubrand. He was already standing there by the well beneath the castle gate, his helmet upon his head. Guntmund relayed the challenge to him.

Hadubrand asked from whom it came: "—and why are you so enraged?"

Guntmund replied: "The Wälsungs have arrived there and are landing with twelve thousand men. Seven thousand are still standing in the strait out there. But where it says 'at the Grind,' that's where most of the troops are. And I believe that Helge now wants to fight!" King Hadubrand said: "Let us proclaim the call to arms throughout our entire kingdom and let us go out to meet them. Let no one who is still able to fight stay at home. Let us also send a message to the Sons of the Ring and to King Hagen, to Half the Elder—they are all mighty warriors."

At Wolfenstein, the two armies clashed, and a fierce battle ensued. Helge led his men forward into the enemy ranks, and many men fell. Then he suddenly caught sight of a group of shield-maiden warriors, as if he were seeing them in flames: it was Siegrun, the king's daughter. Helge now charged King Hadubrand once more and struck him down beside the standard.

Then Siegrun called out to him: "Thank you for this great deed! Now take the land and throne! This is a day of great joy for me! You will have glory and honor for having slain such a mighty king!"

King Helge then took over the kingdom and reigned there for a long time. He made Siegrun his wife and does not appear again in this story. Sinnfessel then returned home with his army, but soon set out on military campaigns once more. On one such campaign, he encountered a beautiful woman and desired her greatly.

But Borghilde's brother—his stepmother, Siegmund's wife—was also courting this woman. So they settled the matter by force in battle, and Sinnfessel killed Borghilde's brother.

Sinnfessel continued to wage war thereafter and faced many dangers, but was victorious everywhere. He became known and feared, and returned home in the fall with many and great wealth. He told his father about the incident with Borghild's brother, and Siegmund relayed it to the queen.

Borghild demanded that Sinnfessel leave the kingdom and made it known that she no longer wished to see him. Siegmund, however, replied that he would not let him go and offered to make amends to her with gold and great wealth, even though he had never made amends for anyone before; but it is no use arguing with women.

This time, she did not succeed in her intent and said: "You must decide on this matter, my lord, and so it is fitting."

She now prepared her brother's funeral with the king's approval, arranged a banquet with the finest food, and invited many noble men. Borghild herself served the men their drink.

So she also came before Sinnfessel with a large horn and said, "Drink, too, stepson!"

He took the horn, peered into it, and said, "The drink is murky!" Siegmund said, "Give it to me!" and drained the horn.

But the queen said, "Why should others drink for you?" A little later, however, she returned with the horn: "Drink now!" And she reviled him with many words.

He took the horn and said, "The drink is adulterated!"

Once more Siegmund said, "Give it to me!"

For the third time she came and offered him a drink, asking if he truly possessed the courage of the Wälsungs. Sinnfessel took the horn and said, "There is poison in the drink!"

Then Siegmund advised him, "Let it run through your beard, son!" But the king was already very drunk when he spoke thus.

Sinnfessel drank and fell down dead. Then Siegmund was overcome with grief, and his sorrow nearly cost him his life. He took the corpse in his arms, went into the forest, and came to a strait. There he saw a man in a small boat. This man asked if he wished to cross the strait. Siegmund agreed. But the boat was so small that it could not carry all three of them, so the dead man was ferried across first. Siegmund then walked along the shore, but soon the boat with the man vanished from his sight.

Then Siegmund turned back toward home. He banished the queen, and she died soon afterward. King Siegmund henceforth ruled his kingdom and was regarded as the greatest hero and king of ancient times.

There was a king named Eigel; he was rich and respected. His daughter was named Gerda, and she was the most beautiful and wisest of all women. King Siegmund heard that she was, in his eyes, unlike any other, and he sought out King Eigel. The king prepared a grand banquet for him—in case Siegmund might be planning a military campaign against him. Messengers now traveled back and forth between them to ensure that matters would be settled through friendship rather than military force.

King Siegmund was provided with opportunities to purchase travel supplies along the way and offered other conveniences for his journey. He arrived, and the kings dined together in a hall; this feast was lavishly prepared and attended by a large retinue.

King Heider, one of King Hunding's surviving sons, had also arrived and wished to form an alliance by marriage with King Eigel. Eigel realized full well that neither Siegmund nor Heider could be given the same promise, and believed he knew in advance that discord would arise from the one who did not receive Gerda.

So he spoke to his daughter: "You are a wise woman, and I have always said that you should choose your husband yourself: now

choose between the two kings, and my will in this matter shall be as yours."

She replied: "This choice seems difficult to me, and yet I choose the king who is the noblest—and that is King Siegmund, even though he is already advanced in years."

Then King Heider departed, and she was given to King Siegmund.

He married her and consummated the marriage. Day after day, their wedding celebrations grew more splendid and were celebrated with greater enthusiasm.

Afterward, they returned home to Heunenland, and King Eigel, his father-in-law, went with them.

King Heider, however, and his brothers now gathered an army and marched against King Siegmund. For although the sons of Hunding had always drawn the short straw in their conflicts with the Wälsungs, this very occasion spurred them on. This time they intended to overcome the Wälsungs' fighting spirit and invaded Heunenland. They sent a message to King Siegmund beforehand, however, for they did not wish to sneak up on him and knew full well that he would not flee.

King Siegmund replied that he would come to the battle. He then assembled an army. Gerda, however, fled into the forest with a maid. They took many precious goods with them and remained there while the armies fought.

The Hundings leaped from their ships, an invincible army.

King Siegmund and Eigel now raised their battle standards, and the battle horns were sounded. Siegmund also had that horn blown —the one his father had once owned—and rallied his men. Yet he had far fewer men than his opponents. A bitter battle ensued, and although Siegmund was already advanced in years, he fought with extraordinary bravery and was always at the very forefront. Neither shield nor armor could withstand him. Time and again that day he

broke through the enemy ranks, and no one could foresee how the battle between them would end. Spears and arrows—many of them—flew through the air, but his guardian spirits protected him so well that he remained unharmed. No one knew the number of men who fell before him.

As the battle had been ebbing and flowing for some time, a man suddenly stepped into the fray wearing a deep hat and a blue cloak; he had only one eye and carried a mace in his hand. This man advanced toward King Siegmund and swung his mace at him, and when King Siegmund struck with all his might, his sword struck the halberd and shattered into two pieces. From then on, the number of casualties mounted; fortune had deserted King Siegmund, and many of his men fell. He, however, spared no effort and ceaselessly spurred his men on. Yet, as the saying goes: "one man is no match for many." In this battle, King Siegmund and King Eigel fell at at the head of their forces, along with the greater part of their army.

King Heider then sought out the royal court, intending to capture Gerda there, but he failed: he captured neither woman nor property. He now swept through the land and divided it among his retinue, believing he had exterminated the entire Wälsung lineage and thinking he had nothing more to fear from then on.

Gerda then hurried to the battlefield that night after the battle and reached the spot where King Siegmund lay wounded, and asked him if he could still be healed.

But he uttered these words:

> Many still live on weaker hope,
> but my fortune has deserted me.

"I will not be healed. Wotan does not want me to draw my sword again, ever since he broke this one: I fought as long as it pleased him!"

Gerda said: "I would care for nothing else, if only you were

healed and could avenge my father."

The king replied: "That task is meant for another: you are to raise a boy; rear him well and with care, for this boy will become the most famous and noble of our lineage. Also, keep these sword fragments safe. From them, a fine sword will one day be forged, named Grief. Our son will wield it and accomplish many great deeds with it that will never fade, and his name will live on as long as the human world endures. Be of good heart! But my wounds are wearing me down, and I now wish to join our kin who have already gone before us."

Gerda sat there watching over him until he died; then day broke.

Suddenly she saw many ships coming ashore and said to her maid: "Let us quickly change our clothes, and you shall take my name and pass yourself off as the king's daughter." And so they did.

The sailors had spotted the multitude of the fallen and also saw how the women were now fleeing toward the forest. They immediately realized that significant events were unfolding and leaped from the ships. These ships were commanded by Half, the son of King Helferich of Denmark, who was sailing his fleet along the coast at that very moment. The king ordered that the women be pursued, and they were brought before him. He asked the women who they were, but appearances were deceiving this time, for now the maid began to speak on behalf of her mistress and recounted the fate of King Siegmund and King Eigel and many other brave men, as well as who was to blame.

King Half went on to ask if they knew where the king's treasure was hidden.

The maid replied, "It is easy to guess that we know"—and led them to the treasure.

There they found great riches, and none of the men thought they had ever seen as many—or even more—treasures in one place,

and they carried everything to the ships. Gerda, however, and the maid had to follow him.

The king took the helm, while the women sat in the main cabin of the ship. He struck up a conversation with them and paid close attention to the way they spoke. King Half now returned home to his kingdom with great spoils and recounted that the kings there —who were the most famous of their time—had fallen.

After Half had been home for a short time, his mother, the queen, asked her son, "Why does the more beautiful woman wear fewer rings and simpler garments? I also suspect that she is the nobler one, the one you have dressed more modestly."

He replied: "I, too, have always suspected that she lacks the mind of a maiden, for when we met, she clearly understood how to receive men of noble birth; let us now put this to the test."

During a banquet, it so happened that King Half sat down with the women for a conversation and asked, "What do you women use as a sign of the hour when dawn begins to break after the night, yet you see no celestial bodies?"

The real maid replied, "I have a sign for that; in my youth, I was accustomed to drinking mead in the early morning. And ever since I had to give it up, I have always stayed awake at that hour. That is my sign!"

King Half smiled and said, "A bad habit for a king's daughter!" Then he turned to Gerda and asked the same question. She replied, "My father gave me a little gold ring with the property that it grows cold on my finger in the early morning, and that is my sign."

Then the king said, "There was plenty of gold for maids to carry. You have hidden yourself from me for a long time, and yet I would have treated you as if we were both a king's children, even if you had told me right away. And you shall be treated even better and with the dignity you deserve, for you shall become my wife, and I will give you a morning gift as soon as you have given birth

to your child."

She answered and told him the whole truth about her fate, and she now remained with him in high esteem and appeared as the most worthy of wives.

It must now be said that Gerda gave birth to a boy, and the boy was brought to King Helferich, the father of King Halt. He rejoiced greatly when he saw the sharp eyes the boy had in his head, and said, no one would ever be his equal or even resemble him. He was sprinkled with water and named Siegfried.

Siegfried now grew up with Helferich and was raised with great love, and every child loved him. Everyone agrees that no one was his equal in bearing and stature. When the greatest men and kings of ancient times are named, Siegfried stands above all others in the northern half of this world in terms of strength and boldness, zeal for action, and agility.

Now Helferich married his son Half to Gerda and also determined the dowry.

Siegfried's teacher was named Reigen and was the son of Reidmer. He taught him the arts, board games, the runes, how to speak many languages, and various other things, as befits a king's son.

One day, when they were alone, Reigen asked Siegfried if he knew how great a hoard his father Siegmund had possessed and who now ruled over it.

Siegfried replied that the kings Half and Helferich were safeguarding it.

Reigen asked, "Do you trust them completely?"

Siegfried replied, "It is only fitting that they safeguard it until it serves me well, for they know how to guard it better than I do."

On another occasion, Reigen struck up a conversation with Siegfried and said, "It is strange that you wish to become the kings'

stablehand yet walk about like a wanderer!"

Siegfried replied: "It is not so, for we decide everything together, and it is up to me to decide what I want."

Reigen said: "Then ask them to give you a horse."

Siegfried replied: "That will happen as soon as I wish."

Soon after, the kings met with Siegfried and asked him, "What do you want from us?"

Siegfried replied: "I would like a horse for my amusement."

Helferich said: "Choose a horse for yourself, and anything else you wish to have from our estate."

The next day, Siegfried rode into the forest. There he met an old man with a long beard whom he did not know. The old man asked where Siegfried was going.

He replied, "I want to choose a horse for myself. Give me some advice."

The old man said, "Let's go and drive the horses into the river."

They drove the horses into the deep river, but they all swam back to shore—except for one stallion—and Siegfried took that one. He was gray in color, young in age, tall in stature, and full of promise. No one had ever been able to dismount from his back.

The bearded man said: "This stallion is descended from Sausewind, and you must train him carefully, for he will become the best of all stallions."

With that, the man vanished. Siegfried named the stallion Graue, and he did indeed become the best stallion.

Once more, Reigen spoke to Siegfried: "You have far too few possessions, and it grieves me that you wander about like a village lad. I know of a great hoard for you to find, and it is likely that seeking it would bring you honor, and prestige, if you were to

obtain it."

Siegfried asked where it was and who guarded it. Reigen replied: "His name is Fafner, and he lies nearby, in a place called Zur Niederheide. If you go there, you will have to say: 'Never have you seen greater wealth and gold in one place, and you will never need more than this, and you would become the oldest of all kings and the most famous.'"

Siegfried replied: "I know well the nature of this worm, and though I am still young, I have learned that no one dares to face him because of his size and ferocity."

Reigen said: "That doesn't matter! True, its stature is like that of a lindworm, but people make more of it than it really is. Your forefathers would have judged it the same way; but although you are of the Wälsung lineage, you do not seem to possess their nature —they who are first named in matters of glory."

"It may be," replied Siegfried, "that I lack much of their zeal for action and resolve, but there's no need to hold this against me, for I am still but a little past childhood. But why do you provoke me so much?"

Reigen replied: "There is a legend about this, and I will tell it to you." Siegfried said: "Let me hear it."

Reigen began: "This is the beginning of this story: my father's name was Reidmar, a powerful and wealthy man. His first son was named Fafner, another was Otter, and I was the third and the least of them in ability and appearance. Yet I could work with iron, as well as silver and gold, and made something useful out of everything. My brother Otter had a different inclination and nature: he was a formidable hunter, surpassing all other men. By day he slept in the form of an otter in a waterfall, bringing fish up in his mouth and throwing them onto the shore. The fish he brought to his father, and this was a great help to him. Often he was still in the form of an otter when he came home late and ate alone, squinting, because he could not bear to watch the food

dwindle. In this waterfall lived another dwarf in the form of a pike named Antwort or Notwehr, who caught his food there, for there were many fish in this waterfall, which is also named the Antwortfall after him.

"Fafner was by far the greatest and fiercest of us and wanted everything there to be named after him alone.

"Once, Wotan, Luge, and Hennar traveled this way and came to the Antwortfall just as Otter had caught another salmon and was devouring it on the bank, squinting. Luge picked up a stone and threw it at Otter, killing him.

"The Aesir considered their catch a great stroke of luck and skinned the otter. That evening they also reached Reidmar, asked for lodging, and showed him their catch. Then we captured them and imposed upon them, as penance and a condition for their lives, to fill the otter's hide with gold and cover the outside with red gold.

"Then the Aesir sent Luge out to procure the gold. He first went to the sea giantess Ran and borrowed her net; with it, he sailed to Antworts or Notwehr's Falls and cast the net before the pike, which swam right into it. Then Luge cried out:

> Who is this fish that plows through the waves
> and knows not how to guard itself from the trap?
> Now free your head from Hel's jaws
> and find me gold from the waves!
>
> My name is Notwehr, Terror is my ancestor,
> I have already traversed many rapids;
> in primeval times, the wretched Norn
> condemned me to wade in the water forever!

"Luge now saw all the gold that Antwort possessed. When the gold had been weighed, the dwarf wanted to keep a ring for himself, but Luge took that as well.

"The dwarf begged him not to take this ring from him, for if he

kept it, he could use it to multiply his gold again; for this ring was a 'Nothelfer,' and Antwort was his need!

"But Luge decided he should not keep a single penny; he took the Nothelfer ring from him as well and turned to leave.

"Then Antwort called after him, saying that the ring would bring death to anyone who possessed it.

"Luge replied that this suited him just fine; and, he added, it would come to pass just as he had foretold—he would make sure to drive that point home to whoever received the ring.

"With that, he went on his way and arrived at Reidmar's court, where he showed Wotan the gold and also presented him with the ring Not-Antwort, or Nothelfer. Wotan found it so exceedingly beautiful that he took it from the pile before handing the gold over to Reidmar.

"The Aesir now presented the treasure to Reidmar, filled the otter skin with gold, and set it on its feet. Now they had to heap gold over it and completely cover it on the outside. When that was done, Reidmar stepped forward; but he could still see a single whisker and commanded that it, too, be covered, or else their agreement would be null and void. So Wotan had to pull the ring Nothelfer from his hand and cover the hair with it:

"Then Luge spoke to Reidmar and passed on the curse.

> The gold has been paid,
> and you have received a great price for our leader,
> Yet may it not bring blessings to you and your sons—
> may it bring death to you all!

"Since Reidmar had received this gold as atonement for his son, Fafner and I now demanded our share as atonement for our brother. But Reidmar would not grant us a single penny of the gold, and this became a source of rage for Fafner, for he slew our father and murdered him, yet I received nothing of the inheritance. He replied that there was little chance he would share the gold with

me after he had killed our father for it, and advised me to leave, lest I suffer the same fate as Reidmar.

"Fafner had taken the sword Rausching and the Helmet of Terror. He placed this helmet upon his head. It was called the Helmet of Terror or the Helmet of Horror, because every living creature who saw it, was filled with dread at the sight of him. So I fled and took the sword Schwirr from Reidmar's inheritance with me. Fafner, however, became so malicious that he lay down out on the low heath and would not allow anyone to enjoy the hoard. He set up camp there and gradually turned into that dreadful worm in the form of a dragon, lying over the gold. S later, I came to King Helferich and became his blacksmith. And this is the outcome of this story: that I have lost my father's inheritance and the blood money for my brother's death."

Siegfried said: "You have lost much, and your blood relatives have behaved very badly. Now forge me a sword with your skill, one without equal, and I will accomplish this deed if my heart is set on it and you wish for me to slay this dreadful dragon!"

Reigen replied: "I will forge it for you with confidence, and with this sword you will be able to slay Fafner."

Reigen then forged a sword and placed it in Siegfried's hand. He took the sword, weighed it in his hand, and said: "Is this your best work?" — He struck the sword against the anvil so that it broke, and threw the blade away. Then he ordered him to forge a better one.

Reigen tried another sword and handed it to Siegfried, who inspected it. "You will certainly like this one; it was rather tricky for me to forge."

Siegfried tested this sword as well, but it broke just like the first one. Then Siegfried said to Reigen: "You will be just like your relatives and just as treacherous."

With that, he went to his mother Gerda, and she welcomed him

joyfully. They spoke with one another and drank together. Siegfried asked "Have I heard correctly that King Siegmund, my father, gave you the sword Gram in two pieces?"

She replied: "That is true."

Siegfried asked: "Give it to me; I would like to have it."

She believed he was destined for greatness and gave him the sword. With that, he went back to Reigen and challenged him to forge a sword from it to the best of his ability.

This enraged Reigen greatly, but he took the sword fragments to the smithy. To him, Siegfried seemed excessively demanding when it came to blacksmithing. But he forged a sword from them, and when he pulled it from the forge, it appeared to the apprentices as if flames were burning from its edges. He told Siegfried to take the sword and said that he knew nothing about sword-forging, even if this one failed.

Siegfried struck the anvil with the sword, but it split the anvil all the way down to its base without breaking or splitting in two. He then praised the sword highly, hurried down to the river with a tuft of wool, and threw it against the current; the sword, which he held up against it, cut the tuft of wool in two. Siegfried then went home joyfully.

But Reigen said: "You must now fulfill your promise and seek out Fafner, now that I have forged this sword for you."

Siegfried replied: "That will be done, but first I must fulfill another—namely, to avenge my father."

The older Siegfried grew, the more beloved he became among all the people, and every child loved him most dearly.

Greif was the name of a man who was Siegfried's maternal uncle; he was a seer and could foresee people's fates. Soon after the sword Gram was forged, Siegfried set out to meet him and sought to learn from him what his future held. Greif was reluctant for a

long time, but at last, at Siegfried's earnest request, he foretold his entire fate—exactly as it later came to pass. When Greif had prophesied all the things Siegfried had asked about, Siegfried rode home again.

Now Siegfried stepped before the kings Helferich and Half and said to them: "We have been here a long time and have earned your deep love and great esteem; but now I wish to leave the country and seek out Hunding's sons, for I want them to learn that not all the Wälsungs are dead. And for this we want your support."

The kings declared that they would provide everything he desired. A great fleet was now equipped, and everything—the ships and all the military gear—was prepared in the finest and most artful manner, so that his voyage became more honorable than any before. Siegfried commanded the Drachen, which was the largest and most perfect ship; its sails were richly adorned and magnificent to behold.

They sailed for several days with a favorable wind, until suddenly a violent storm broke out and the sea foamed as if one were looking at sacrificial blood. But Siegfried would not allow the sails to be reefed, even if they were torn, but commanded them to be set even higher than before.

As they were now sailing past a mountain promontory, a man called down to the ship and asked who was in command of the ship and its crew.

He was told that Siegfried, son of Siegmund, was the lord—"who is now the most famous of all young men."

The man confirmed: "Yes, everyone says the same about him, that no other prince can compare. I wish then you would lower the sails on one of your ships and take me aboard."

They asked for his name, but he replied with these lines:

They call me Neeker; I feed the ravens
on every battlefield, O young Wälsung;
you may also call me the Old Man of the Mountain,
Fulfiller and Many-Formed—
take me on your journey!

They steered toward land and took the old man aboard. Then the weather calmed, and they sailed until they reached the realm of the Hunding sons. There, Many-Formed vanished.

There they now let fire and swords rage, slew the men, burned the farms, and laid waste to everything wherever they went. Now all the people fled to King Heider and reported that an army had entered the land and was advancing with greater fury than had ever been seen before; they also lamented that the sons of Hunding had not been far-sighted enough, for they had said they no longer needed to fear the Wälsungs: but now this army is led by Siegfried, son of Siegmund. King Heider then had a call to arms to be proclaimed throughout his entire kingdom; he did not wish to take to flight, but summoned all the men who were willing to follow him into battle.

And so he marched out to face Siegfried, along with his brothers and a mighty army. They engaged in the fiercest battle. Arrows and spears could be seen flying through the air, battle axes swinging wildly, shields shattering, breastplates smashed, helmets cracked, skulls split, and many a man falling to the ground. As the battle raged on, Siegfried charged forward, past the battle standards, his sword Gram in hand; he struck down both men and horses and pressed through the enemy ranks. The troops fled from him wherever he turned, neither helmet nor chain mail could withstand him, and no one thought they had ever seen such a man before. This battle dragged on for a long time, with great loss of life and fierce attacks, and it came to pass—as rarely happens—that the sons of Hunding achieved nothing despite their many efforts. So many of them fell that their number was scarcely known.

Soon Siegfried drove back King Hunding's sons. He struck at

King Heider and split his helmet, his head, and his armored body; then he cut Schwertwart, his brother, in two and killed all of Hunding's sons who were still alive, as well as the greater part of their army.

Siegfried now returned home with a glorious victory, rich spoils, and great fame, which he had earned from this campaign, and feasts were held to celebrate his homecoming.

Shortly thereafter, Reigen spoke to Siegfried and said to him: "Now you must also strike Fafner's helmet from his head, as you have promised, now that you have avenged your father and your other blood relatives."

Siegfried replied: "I will fulfill what I have promised; it has not slipped my mind."

Soon Siegfried rode with Reigen up to the heath to the path that Fafner was accustomed to crawl along when he wanted to reach the water, and it is said that the rock was thirty fathoms high where it jutted out over the water when he drank.

"Reigen," said Siegfried, "you said the dragon was no bigger than a lindworm, but to me his trail seems enormous."

Reigen replied: "Dig a pit and sit inside it; when the worm crawls down to the water, stab it in the heart and thus slay it—then you will earn great glory!"

Siegfried said: "But how will this end if I am covered in the worm's blood?"

Reigen replied: "You are hard to advise, for you are fearful of everyone and everything, and quite unlike your ancestors in courage."

Siegfried now rode on across the heath, while Reigen, filled with fear, vanished from the path. Siegfried then dug a pit along Fafner's trail, and as he was working on it, an old man with a long beard came down the path and asked what he was doing there. Siegfried

explained it to him.

Then the old man said: "That is unwise, but dig several pits and let the blood flow into them, while you sit in another and stab the worm in the heart from there." With that, the old man took his leave.

Siegfried then dug several pits as he had been advised. When the worm crawled toward the water, there was a violent tremor that shook the ground everywhere nearby. It spewed poison all along the path before it, but Siegfried was not startled, nor did he fear the roar, and when the worm crawled over the pit, he thrust his sword beneath its left jaw, driving it in all the way to the hilt. Then Siegfried leaped out of the pit and snatched the sword for himself. His arms were covered in blood up to his armpits.

As soon as the monstrous worm felt its mortal wound, it lashed out with its head and tail, shattering everything that came near it.

Only then did he notice his slayer and demanded: "Who are you? Who is your father? Or what is your lineage, that you are so brave and dare to wield this weapon against me again?"

Siegfried replied: "My lineage is unknown to men. I am called a noble beast; I have neither father nor mother, and I have always wandered alone."

Fafner said: "If you have neither father nor mother, by what miracle were you then born? And if you do not tell me your name on the day of my death, then I will know that you are lying!"

Then Siegfried cried out: "My name is Siegfried, and my father is Siegmund."

Fafner asked: "Who goaded you into this deed? And why did you let yourself be goaded? Had you not heard how all the people feared me and my Wucherhelm?—Bright-eyed lad, you had a bold father!"

"My newfound courage spurred me on, and this strong hand

helped to bring it to pass, as did this sharp sword that you now know—for rarely is one bold in old age who was foolish in childhood!" replied Siegfried.

Fafner said: "I know this: had you grown up with your father, you would know how to fight courageously; but it astonishes me greatly that a former and a prisoner of war should have dared to rise up against me, for prisoners of war are rarely fit for battle.

Siegfried replied: "You reproach me for being far from my kin? And even if my mother was a prisoner of war, I was never held captive, and you surely sensed how free I was."

Fafner said: "You meet everything I say with words of anger: so may the gold I hold bring you to your death!"

Siegfried replied: "Everyone clings to his possessions until that one day, for everyone must die eventually."

Fafner said: "You pay little heed to my example. He who sets sail unawares will drown. So you'd better wait on land until the wind dies down.—My brother Reigen advised you to kill me, but it amuses me that he will also bring about your own death. I wore the Helmet of Terror before all the people ever since I lay upon my brother's inheritance, and thus I spewed poison in all directions from myself, so that no one dared to come near me. No sword frightened me, and never were there so many men facing me that I did not consider myself far stronger; for all feared me."

Siegfried replied: "The multitude you boast of does not guarantee victory for all: whoever finds himself among many will discover, sooner or later, that no one remains the strongest alone."

Fafner said: "Therefore I advise you: mount your stallion and ride away as fast as you can, for it has often happened that he who has already received a mortal wound still takes his revenge."

"Such is your advice, but I will do otherwise. I will ride to the camp and take for myself the great store of gold that your kin possessed," replied Siegfried.

"Ride on, then, and you will find there so much gold that it will be more than enough for the rest of your days—but this gold will also be your death and the death of everyone else who possesses it," said Fafner

Siegfried rose and said: "I would ride home, even if I were to forgo this great wealth, knowing that I would never die; yet every happy man should enjoy all this wealth goods right up to that one final day—but you, Fafner, lie there dying until Hel claims you!" Then Fafner died.

Now Reigen also came over and called out to Siegfried: "Hail, my lord, you have won a great victory by slaying Fafner, for no one before you was so bold as to dare lie in wait on his trail, and this glorious deed will live on as long as the world endures!" Then he leaped to his feet, gazed down at the ground for a moment, and said in great anger: "But you have killed my brother, although I am hardly blameless in this deed!"

Siegfried took his sword Gram, wiped it on the grass, and said: "You fled while I was accomplishing the deed. My hand wielded this sharp sword, and I pitted my strength against the dragon's might, while you lay in the heath and did not know where heaven was from earth."

Reigen replied: "The dragon would still be lying on his lair if you had not used the sword which I forged with this very hand of mine. But you alone could not have accomplished it—neither you nor anyone else."

> But Siegfried uttered these words:
> Even now, the heart counts for more
> than the hardness of steel
> when men measure themselves in battle!

Reigen said once more, now with great sorrow: "In any case, you have slain my brother, and I am hardly blameless in this deed."

Then he cut out the worm's heart with the sword called

Schwirrt, drank of Fafner's blood, and said: "Grant me, Siegfried, a request that is easy for you: take the heart to the fire, roast it, and then give it to me to eat. This I demand as penance."

Siegfried did as he was told and roasted the heart on a spit, and when it began to bubble inside, he touched it with his finger to taste whether it was done. In doing so, he burned himself and put his finger in his mouth. But when the blood of the worm's heart dripped from his tongue, he understood the language of the birds. Then he heard the titmice in the branches above him chirp: "Here sits Siegfried, roasting Fafner's heart. He should eat it himself; then he would become wiser than any man."

Another sang: "And there lies Reigen, seeking to deceive those who trust him."

The third said: "Let him cut off his head, then he alone may rule over the immeasurable hoard."

The fourth sang: "He would surely be wiser if he followed what they advised him, rode out to Fafner's lair, took the great hoard that lies there, and then rode out of the Hindin Mountain, where Brünhild sleeps. From her he could learn much wisdom! He would be wise if he followed this advice and gave proper thought to his needs; for I suspect the wolf is there where I see his ears."

The fifth sang: "He is not nearly as wise as I thought, if he spares her yet killed his brother."

Finally, the sixth spoke: "That would be a swift solution—if he were to slay him and rule the hoard alone."

Then Siegfried said to himself: "I will not suffer the misfortune of having Reigen become my murderer; rather, let the brothers go their separate ways!" With that, he drew his sword Gram and cut off Reigen's head. Then he ate a piece of Fafner's heart, but he saved some of it for himself. Now he swung himself onto his horse and rode back along Fafner's trail until he reached his dwelling. He found it standing open: The doors were all made of iron, as were

the door frames; were all the pillars in the house, which was built entirely into the earth.

Siegfried found an immeasurable amount of gold there, as well as the sword Rausching, the Wucherhelm, a golden fountain, and many other treasures, including the Nothelfer ring. He found so much gold that it seemed unlikely to him that two or three horses could carry it. He then took all the gold, tied it into two bundles, and loaded them onto Graue; then he took the stallion by the bridle. But the horse would not move, and it was of little use to urge him on. Siegfried now realized what the animal wanted: despite the loads, he swung himself onto its back and applied his spurs; then the stallion ran as if he were unburdened.

Siegfried rode for a long time and turned south toward Franconia until he reached the Hindinberg. On the mountain he saw a great light, as if a fire were burning, and it shone up to the heavens. As he drew nearer, a shield wall formed before him, made up of shields lined up side by side, and a banner fluttered above the center of the circle. Siegfried rode into the shield wall and saw a person lying there, asleep in full armor. He removed the helmet from the person's head and saw that it was a woman. She was clad in armor that fit so tightly it seemed as if it were fused to her flesh. He then slit open the chain mail with his sword, from the neck opening all the way down, and likewise along her arms, cutting as if through a garment.

This awakened the woman, and she called herself Hilde. She was Brünnhild, the Valkyrie. Siegfried thought she must have been sleeping for quite a long time.

She asked: "Who was so strong that he cut through the chain mail and disturbed my sleep? Or has Siegfried, son of Siegmund, come here—the one who wears Fafner's helmet and holds his murderer in his hands?"

Siegfried replied: "He who accomplished this deed is of the Wälsung lineage. And I have heard that you are the daughter of a

mighty king; I have also been told of your beauty and your sacred knowledge, and of these things I would like to learn."

Brünnhild spoke: "Two kings went into battle, one was named Helmgunther; he was old, but a great warrior, and Wotan had promised him victory; the other was named Agnar, Auda's brother. I slew Helmgunther in that battle. But Wotan struck me with the Sleep Thorn in retribution for that and decreed that I should never again choose the victor and commanded that I must surrender myself. But I vowed never to give myself to any man who might be afraid."

Siegfried said: "Teach me wisdom in matters of great importance!"

She said: "You will know what is best, yet I will gladly teach you if, among the runes and other things I know, there is anything that may be of use to you in certain situations. Let us drink a toast: May the gods grant us a good day, may you gain benefit and glory from my knowledge, and may you one day remember what we have discussed!"

Brünhild filled a chalice, presented it to Siegfried, and said:

> Here I bring you beer, you tree of battle,
> mixed with power and glory,
> filled with songs of love and runes,
> with enchanted song and with blessings.
>
> Carve victory runes if you desire victory,
> and engrave them into the hilt of your sword;
> skillfully etch them onto the back and blade,
> and call upon Ziu twice.
>
> Learn the elder runes, so that no cunning woman
> betrays your trust with poison,
> Engrave them on the horn, on the back of the hand,
> and write "Not" on your fingernail.

Know the childbirth runes to save the child
and deliver it from the womb;
draw signs of healing around its hands and joints,
and ask the Disen for assistance.

Learn the storm runes to calm the sea
and safely rescue the sailor;
engrave storm runes into the oars with fire,
and mark the stem and the rudder:
No matter how black the waves,
no matter how steep the torrent,
you will find safety and be saved from the sea.

Learn the Body Runes if you wish to be a healer
and know how to tend to wounds;
Carve them onto bark and leaves
where the tree's branches lean toward the east.

Learn the Law Runes, so your adversary may never
repay you with harm for angry speech;
Envelop the discord, weave around the strife,
and join your rods together,
Until the Day of Judgment, when, from far and wide,
the people gather for the assembly.

Know the Poetic Runes if you wish
to become wiser than all the others.
Created by Wotan, carved by Wotan,
who also devised their meanings,
intoxicated by the drink that once escaped
from Mime's brain and horns.

These are the Elder Runes, these are the Birth Runes,
These are the Body Runes and all the Poetic Runes,
These are the Victory Runes, full of strength.

And whoever recognizes them—
unconfused and uncorrupted—
Let him make use of them
before the world of the gods comes to an end!

Siegfried spoke: "Nowhere in the world is there a wiser woman than you. And I swear to you that I want you as my wife, for you are of my spirit."

She replied: "You are the one I love most, and even if I had to choose among all men:"

Yet I know that your life will not last long—
a mighty battle is brewing
Therefore, choose while the choice is still yours,
you mighty warrior in battle:
Whether in speech or silence,
your heart advises you rightly:
your fate has long since been decided!

And Siegfried resolved:

And even if I knew I would die,
I would not flee from you;
I was not born a coward,
I will follow the counsel that called me to you,
as long as I still live on earth!

They sealed this with oaths between themselves.

Siegfried now rode on, he rode on until he came to the great court of Braustal, where a mighty chieftain named Heimer ruled. He had taken Brünhild's sister as his wife; her name was Bankhilde, for she had remained at home and learned the art of needlework; but because Brünhild wore a helmet and armor and went into battle, she was called Brünhilde. Brünhild and Bankhilde, however, were daughters of King Etzel.

Heimer and Bankhilde had a son named Alswin, a noble young man. He was playing outside with other men when they saw a man

riding toward the court. They stopped playing and marveled at the man, for they had never seen his equal. Alswin then went out to meet Siegfried and his men, and he offered to let him stay with him and to provide whatever he might need. Siegfried accepted this.

Arrangements were then made to serve him with honor: four men lifted the treasure from the stallion, and the fifth took Graue for himself. There were many beautiful treasures and rarities among them, and it was a delight to behold the spears and helmets and the broad rings, wondrous large gold cups, and all manner of military equipment.

His feat of glory became known throughout the lands—how he had slain the fearsome dragon. Siegfried stayed there a long time with Alswin, and they loved each other dearly; each was fond of the other. They engaged in all manner of pastimes: they readied their weapons, fitted arrows to their bows, and rode out to hunt with their falcons.

Siegfried's shield, however, was inscribed as follows: it was overlaid with pure gold, and a dragon engraved upon it, painted dark red in the upper half and light red in the lower. His helmet, his saddle, and his tunic; he wore a gold breastplate, and all his weapons were inlaid with gold. For this reason, all his weapons bore the mark of the dragon, so that anyone who saw him and knew that he had slain the great dragon might recognize who was riding toward them. His hair was reddish-blond in color and magnificent to behold, falling in large curls; his beard was thick and short, and of the same color. He had a high nose and a full, strong-featured face; his eyes were so sharp that few dared to look beneath his brows. His shoulders were so broad that one might have thought they belonged to two men; his figure was entirely tailored to him in height and stature, in such a way that it suited him perfectly as a whole. And here is a measure of his height: when he girded himself with his sword Gram, which was seven spans long, and he strode through a field of full-grown rye, the scabbard

on his sword just brushed the upright ears of grain. His strength was even greater than his stature. He was such a wise man that he foresaw things yet to come; he also understood the language of birds, and for this reason few things took him by surprise. He was eloquent and quick-witted, and never began to speak of a matter, nor would he let it go until it seemed to everyone it could not be otherwise than as he said. It was a joy to him to help his people and to test himself in great deeds, to take goods from his enemies and give them to his friends. He never lacked courage and was never fearful.

Now Brünhild, the sister of his wife, had also come to Braustal to visit Heimer and was staying with her maids in the women's quarters. She was more skilled skilled in the arts than other women; she embellished her tapestries with gold and embroidered into them the great deeds Siegfried had accomplished: the slaying of the dragon, the recovery of the hoard, and the killing of Reigen.

On that day, it is said, Siegfried had ridden into the forest with his dogs and hawks and a large retinue, and when he returned home, his hawk flew up to the high tower at the women's quarters and perched in a window. Siegfried climbed up after it and saw a beautiful woman in a hall from there. He recognized that it was Brünhild, and everything struck him as admirable—both her beauty and what she was doing there.

When he entered the hall, he did not wish to converse with the men. Then Alswin asked: "Why, Siegfried, are you so taciturn? Your behavior grieves us, your friends! Why will you not be cheerful? Your hawks hang their heads, and so does your stallion Graue. It's hard for us to remedy this!"

Siegfried said: "My good friend, hear what troubles me. My hawk flew up to a tower, and when I retrieved him, I saw a beautiful woman. She was seated at a golden loom, embroidering upon it my past deeds, now happily accomplished."

Alswin replied: "You have seen Brünhild, Botel's daughter, who

is a consecrated woman."

Siegfried said: "That must be true. But how and when did she come here?"

Alswin replied: "It was shortly after you arrived."

Siegfried said: "And I've only known about it since this very day? This woman has seemed to me the most noble in this world!"

Alswin replied: "Do not set your heart on this one woman, you, a man of such stature. It is wrong to worry about what one cannot attain."

"I must speak to her," cried Siegfried, "give her all my possessions, and win her favor and her love in return."

Alswin said: "Never has a man been found to whom she would have made room beside her or offered a drink. She wants victory in battle and to win glory for herself!"

Then Siegfried said: "We still do not know whether she will answer me or not, whether she will grant me the seat beside her."

The next day, Siegfried made his way to the women's quarters. Alswin stood before the entrance, tending to his arrows. The hall was hung with the most precious embroidered tapestries, and the floor was covered with rugs.

Siegfried entered and greeted Brünhild: "Hail to you, lady! How are you?"

She replied: "I am well! My relatives and friends are alive: yet it is always uncertain what fortune people will enjoy until the end of their days."

He sat down beside her. Now four women entered carrying large golden goblets filled with the finest wine and stood before them.

But Brünhild said: "No one has ever been permitted to sit here, unless my father came."

He replied: “Now it is granted by the one I love most. Now what you promised me has come to pass.”

She said: “You shall be welcome here!” With that, she rose, and the four maidens with her; she stepped before him with a golden goblet and offered him a drink.

He reached out his hand for the golden cup, took her hand in his, and drew her to sit beside him; he put his arm around her neck, kissed her, and said: “No woman was born more beautiful than you.”

Brünhild replied: “A wise piece of advice is not to place one’s trust in a woman’s power, for they always break their promises.”

He said: “Soon the happy day will come when we can enjoy each other’s company.”

She replied: “It is not destined for us to live together; I am a shield-maiden and wear the helmet in the service of kings, and I will be their aid, for I do not shrink from battle!”

Siegfried said: “It would be best for us to live together, for we bear the sorrow that weighs upon us as separation weighs upon us more heavily than sharp weapons.”

Brünhild replied: “I will choose the dead from among the ranks of the warriors, but you shall take Gudrun, Gibich’s daughter, as your own.”

But Siegfried spoke: “No king’s daughter will seduce me, and I will not allow myself to waver on this point: I swear to you that I want you, and no other.”

She said the same. Siegfried thanked her for this promise and gave her the ring Nothelfer, and they swore their oaths anew.

Thereupon Siegfried left her to return to his men and remained with Heimer for a while longer in great happiness.

Gibich was the name of a king; his kingdom lay in the south on

the Rhine. He had three sons: Gunther, Hagen and Guntwurm. Guntwurm, however, was a stepson. His daughter was named Gudrun and was a much-praised maiden. The sons far surpassed other royal children in every virtue, as well as in beauty and stature; thus, the power of the Gibichs was in full bloom.

Gichich had Grimhild as his wife; she was a grim-tempered woman, skilled in sorcery, and possessed secret knowledge. Once, Gudrun, Grimhild's daughter, said to her maids that she could not be happy. One of her ladies asked why she was unhappy.

She replied: "I have no luck in my dreams, and that is why my heart is so full of sorrow; interpret this dream for me, since you are so skilled at it."

The maid said: "Tell me the dream and do not be afraid; people usually dream when the weather changes suddenly."

Gudrun replied: "This time it is not a sudden change in the weather; I dreamed that I saw a beautiful falcon on my hand; its plumage was golden in color."

The woman said: "Many have heard of your beauty, wisdom, and nobility: a prince will come and court you."

Gudrun continued: "Nothing seemed better to me than this falcon, and I would rather give up all my possessions than part with him."

The woman interpreted: "The man who wins you will be well-bred and love you dearly."

Gudrun replied: "That is precisely what troubles me—that I do not know who he is. Let us visit Brünhild; she will know."

She adorned herself with gold and rich splendor and rode with her maids until she came to Brünhild's hall. They men from Braustal noticed them approaching and reported to Brünhild that many women were heading toward the court in gilded chariots.

"That must be Gudrun, Gibich's daughter," said Brünhild. "I

dreamed of her last night; let us go out to meet her. It is not unwelcome women who come to visit us!"

They went out to meet them and welcomed them warmly. Then they entered the resplendent hall. The hall hall was lined with murals and inlaid with silver; rugs were spread beneath their feet, and the maids served them. They tried their hand at various games, but Gudrun remained taciturn.

Then Brünhild spoke: "Why can't you join in our merriment? Don't be like this—let's talk, for our amusement, of mighty kings and their great deeds!"

"Let's do that," repeated Gudrun. "And who, do you think, are the most outstanding kings?"

Brünhild replied: "The sons of Hamund, Hacke and Hagbart! They accomplished many glorious deeds on their military campaigns."

Gudrun said: "True, they are great and widely known, yet Siegar stole their sister, and their men were burned in their own house, and the brothers have been slow to avenge this. But why do you not name my brothers, who now seem to be the foremost men?"

Brünhild replied: "There is good hope for that, but they have not yet proven themselves sufficiently, and I know one who stands far above them, and that is Siegfried, Siegmund's son. He was still a child when he slew Hunding's sons and avenged King Siegmund, his father, and King Eigel, his maternal grandfather."

Gudrun asked: "What is the story behind this? Is it not said that he was not yet born when his father fell!"

Brünhild continued: "At that time, his mother Gerda went to the battlefield and found King Siegmund wounded. She offered to bandage his wounds, but he refused, declaring himself too old to fight any longer, and asked her to take comfort in the knowledge that she would bear the noblest of sons. And once again, the

prophecy of a seer came true! After King Siegmund's passing, she took in King Half, Helferich's son, and Siegfried was raised by him with every honor. He performed feats every day and is today the most famous hero in the whole world!"

Gudrun spoke: "It was out of love alone that you inquired about him. But that is why I came here—to tell you about my dreams, which cause me great distress."

Brünhild replied: "Do not let such things frighten you; you're here among your friends, who all want to cheer you up."

"I had a dream," Gudrun began, "that I left the chamber with several others, and we saw a mighty stag. He towered far above all the other animals, and his coat was golden. We all wanted to catch the game, but I alone reached it. This stag seemed to me better than all other things; then you shot the animal right before my eyes, and that caused me such great pain that I could scarcely bear it, and in return you gave me a young wolf, which splattered me with the blood of my brothers."

Then Brünhild spoke: "Now I will explain to you how things will turn out for us. Siegfried will come to you—the man I have chosen as my husband. Grimhild, your mother, will give him mead laced with magic, and from this great strife will arise among us all. Siegfried will possess you, but you will lose him quickly. Then you will take King Etzel, my brother, but you will soon lose your brothers, and you will kill Etzel."

Gudrun replied: "It is an unbearable sorrow for us to know such things!" And she rode off at once, home to her father Gibich.

Soon afterward, Siegfried also set out with all the gold and took his leave of Heimer and Alswin, his friends. He rode Graue, clad in his full armor and carrying his baggage, until he reached Gibich's hall, and rode into the courtyard there. Then one of the king's men saw him and cried out: "I believe one of the gods is coming! This man is adorned entirely with gold; his stallion is far larger than other stallions; his armor is extraordinarily beautiful

and far surpasses that of other men; but most of all, he himself towers above all men."

Then King Gibich went out with his retinue, greeted the man, and said: "Who are you, that you ride into the castle, something no one has yet dared to do except with my sons' permission?"

He replied: "My name is Siegfried; I am King Siegmund's son."

Then King Gibich called out to him: "You shall be welcome here, and take whatever you wish from us." Siegfried stepped into the hall, and everyone seemed small beside him. — They all served him, and he stood there in great esteem. Grimhild soon noticed how deeply Siegfried loved Brünhild and how often he spoke of her. She thought to herself that it would be a greater blessing if he settled down with them and married Gudrun, her daughter and King Gibich's daughter. She also saw that no one could compare to him, and she saw how much they relied on him. And he possessed immense wealth—far more than anyone could imagine. King Gibich, however, treated him as he would his own sons, and they held him in higher esteem than themselves.

As they sat drinking one evening, the queen rose, stepped before Siegfried, and said: "We rejoice at your presence here, and we wish you every good thing. Take this horn and drink!" He took it and drank it dry. She continued: "King Gibich shall be your father and I your mother; Gunther and Hagen your brothers! And once you have all bound yourselves by oath, you will never find your equal again." Siegfried took this well. But since that drink, he no longer thought of Brünhilde.

Grimhild approached King Gibich one day, wrapped her arms around his neck, and said: "The greatest warrior to be found in the world has now come here; in him we would have a strong ally. Give him your daughter along with abundant wealth and as much territory as he desires, and he would surely be pleased here." Gibich replied: "It is hardly enough to offer one's daughters. But this course is still more honorable—to offer her to him—than to let

others court her."

One evening, Gudrun served drinks, and Siegfried saw that she was a beautiful woman and the most noble in every way. Siegfried had now been there for five half-years, living among them in esteem and friendship. They consulted among themselves, and King Gibich said: "You have done us much good, Siegfried! You have greatly strengthened our realm." Gunther added: "And we will do everything in our power to ensure that you remain here for a long time: we offer you both dominion and our sister herself; no one else would receive her, even if he asked for her!"

Siegfried replied: "Thank you for your honor! I will gladly accept it." They now swore a blood brotherhood, as if they were brothers from the same mother. Then a magnificent wedding was celebrated, lasting many days. Siegfried shared the bridal feast with Gudrun, and there were festivities and amusements of every kind; with each passing day, the feasting grew more lavish than the last. Siegfried also gave Gudrun a portion of Fafner's heart to eat, and from then on she was far more resolute and also wiser. Together they fathered a son and a daughter; their names were Siegmund and Schwanhilde.

One day, Grimhild approached her son Gunther and spoke to him thus: "Your reign is now in full bloom, except for the one fact that you are still without a wife. Woo Brünhild! This is the most prestigious marriage for you, and Siegfried will ride with you to woo her."

Gunther replied: "She is certainly beautiful, and I am not averse to the idea." He then consulted his father, his brothers, and Siegfried as well, and they all encouraged him to do so. Botel, Brünhild's father, was a more powerful king than Gibich, though both were powerful. His son Etzel, Brünhild's brother, was a fierce man, tall and dark-haired, yet handsome and a valiant warrior.

The Gibich sons and Siegfried now made careful preparations for the journey, then rode over hill and valley to King Botel and

presented their proposal of marriage. He received them kindly, but remarked that Brünhild was so proud that she would take only the man she chose. Now the friends rode to Braustal to see Heimer, Brünhild's brother-in-law, who greeted them warmly, and they presented their request to him as well. Heimer explained that the choice was hers as to whom she would take, and said that her hall was nearby; but there was one thing to consider: she would give herself only to the man who rode through the burning fire that now surrounded her hall.

They went to the hall and saw the fire burning around the castle with its roof glistening with gold. Gunther rode on Gote; he spurred the stallion toward the fire, but the horse hesitated. Siegfried asked, "Why do you hesitate, Gunther?"

He replied, "The stallion won't go through the fire." And he asked Siegfried to lend him his gray horse.

"That is granted to you," said Siegfried. Gunther now rode toward the fire on the gray horse, but the stallion would not move beneath him; thus, he was unable to ride through the fire. Then Gunther and Siegfried exchanged their forms, just as Grimhild had taught them. And so Siegfried now rode in Gunther's form. He held his sword Gram in his hand and had golden spurs bound to his feet. Graue immediately took to the fire when he sensed his master and the spurs. Then there was a great roar, and the fire began to rage more fiercely: the earth trembled, and the flames shot high toward the sky. No one before him had dared to do such a thing, and there was so much smoke that it was as if he were riding into darkness: but then the flames subsided; Siegfried leaped from the stallion and stepped into the hall, just as the song says:

> The fire surged, the earth trembled,
> The high flames licked up to the sky,
> Yet none of the kings would dare
> To ride through the embers, to cross over,
> Until Siegfried spurred his gray steed on!
> Then the flames subsided, the fire went out

before the praised prince and hero
in his gleaming armor,
which Reigen crafted for him!

Siegfried entered a beautiful chamber. There sat Brünhild. She asked who the man was. He called himself Gunther Gibichsohn. "And you are destined to be my wife by the consent of your father Botel, your brother-in-law Heimer, and your own promise, when I rode through this billowing blaze."

She said: "I do not know exactly how to answer that." Siegfried stood upright on the floor, leaning on the pommel of his sword, and spoke to Brünhild: "I will pay you a great bride price in gold and fine treasures."

She replied, swaying in her seat like a swan on the waves; she held her sword in her hand, wore her helmet on her head, and was clad in her armor: "Gunther," she said, "do not speak such words to me unless you are the finest of all men! For then you must slay all those who have previously courted me—if you dare."

"I have fought in battles, and my weapons have been stained with men's blood—and now I thirst for it once more!" he said. "You have accomplished many great deeds, but now remember this promise: that if this fire were ridden through, you would follow the man who did so." She now herself sensed the significance and the true meaning of his words, rose, and welcomed him warmly. He stayed with her for three nights, and they shared a bed; but he drew the sword Gram and laid it unsheathed between them.

She asked what this meant. He replied that it was his fate either to consummate his marriage with his wife or to suffer death. Then he took back the ring Nothelfer, which he had once given her, and gave her another ring from Fafner's inheritance.

Thereupon he rode back through the fire to his companions; he exchanged forms with Gunther once more, and they rode to Braustal and told Heimer how things had turned out. That same day, Brünhild also went to Heimer and told him in confidence that

a king had come to her: "He rode through my Waberlohe and declared he had come to marry me and called himself Gunther. But I said that only Siegfried could accomplish this, to whom I had sworn an oath on the mountain. And he is my first love!" Heimer said that things must now remain as they were.

The kings then returned home to Gibich, while Brünhild went to her father Botel. Grimhild welcomed her sons with joy and thanked Siegfried for escorting them. Then preparations were made for the wedding, and a great crowd of people gathered. Now Botel also arrived with Brünhild, his daughter, and with Etzel, his son, and this wedding lasted many days. When the celebration drew to a close, Siegfried was the first to recall all the vows he had made to Brünhild, yet he remained completely calm. Brünhild and Gunther, however, sat together joking and drinking fine wine.

One day, Brünhild and Gudrun went to the Rhine to bathe. Brünhild waded further upstream, and Gudrun asked why she was doing so. Brünhild replied that she would not tolerate the water running from Gudrun's hair onto her own head: "Why should I be your equal in this rather than in other things?"

"I was just thinking that my father is mightier than yours, that my husband accomplished many heroic deeds and rode through the burning fire, while your husband was a servant of King Helferich!" Gudrun replied, full of anger: "You would be wiser to remain silent than to slander my husband. Everyone says that no one his equal has ever been born into this world in every respect, and you have little right to revile him, for he was your first lover: he slew Fafner and rode through the swirling flames, and the man you mistook for Gunther—he lay with you and took the Ring of Nothelfer from your hand. Here it is—do you recognize it?"

Brünnhild saw the ring and recognized it. Then she turned pale as if she were dead. She went home and did not speak another word that evening. When Siegfried came to bed with Gudrun, she asked, "Why is Brünnhild so unhappy?"

Siegfried replied, “I do not know for certain, but I suspect we will soon learn more about it.”

Gudrun continued: “Why isn’t she content with her wealth and happiness and the praise of all men—especially since she got the man she wanted most of all?”

Siegfried asked, “When was it that she said she believed she had the noblest man—or the one she wanted most of all?”

Gudrun replied, “I will ask her tomorrow who she wanted most.”

But Siegfried warned: “I advise you against it, or you’ll regret it if you do.”

The next morning, the two queens sat together. Brünhild was completely silent. Then Gudrun said: “Cheer up, Brünhild—does our conversation annoy you? Or what stands in the way of your joy?”

Brünhild replied: “Vain malice drives you to ask this question; you have a cruel heart!”

“Don’t think that,” said Gudrun, “and tell me instead.”

Brünhild retorted: “Ask only about the one whose affairs you ought to know best, as befits noblewomen! It is easy to be content with good things, for everything goes your way!”

"It is still too early to boast of that. Or is that meant to be a prophecy? Why are you so hostile toward me? I have done you no harm!” said Gudrun.

Brünhild replied: “You shall pay for having Siegfried, for I do not wish for you to enjoy him, nor all that gold.

Gudrun said: “I knew nothing of your marriage, and my father could well have arranged a marriage for me without you being informed.”

“We never kept secrets from each other, and yet we had sworn oaths to one another. But you knew that you were betraying me,

and I will take my revenge," replied Brünhild.

Gudrun said: "You are better married than you deserve, but your arrogance will end badly, and many will have to pay the price."

"I would be satisfied," replied Brünhild, "if you did not have a nobler husband."

Gudrun said: You have a man just as noble, and it remains uncertain who is the greater king; and you have enough wealth and power as well."

Then Brünhild cried out: "Siegfried slew Fafner, and that is worth more than all of Gunther's realm, just as the song goes:

> Siegfried alone slew Fafner the serpent;
> no one will ever forget this,
> as long as the world endures!

"Your brother did not dare to ride Graue through the raging flames!"

Gudrun said: "Graue simply would not enter the fire beneath him, but Gunther himself dared to ride through it; no one should deny him his courage."

Brünhild brushed this aside: "Let us not hide the truth; I do not quite trust your mother."

Gudrun said: "Do not slander her, for she stands by you as she would her own daughter."

"She was the cause of all the evil that gnaws at us; she gave Siegfried the fierce potion, so that he forgot my name entirely," said Brünhild.

Gudrun replied: "You speak many twisted words, and this is a great lie."

Brünhild said: "Enjoy Siegfried's company, just as you have not betrayed me. Your union is improper, and may it end as I hope!"

"I would rather enjoy him than you could ever wish, and no other man has ever received such affection from me—not even once," replied Gudrun.

Brünhild said: "You speak evil, and what slips from your lips will make you regret it. But let us not resort to harsh words."

Gudrun replied: You were the first to hurl harsh words at me! Now you pretend to want to appease me, but all your hatred lies behind it."

"Let us put an end to this useless talk," Brünhild concluded the quarrel. "I have long remained silent about the grief that dwells in my breast—but I love your brother alone. Let us end the discussion!"

Gudrun cried: "Oh, your heart is far from understanding that."

The great discord arose because they had gone to the river, and Brünhild recognized the ring—that was the source of their quarrel. After this conversation, Brünhild went to bed, and word reached King Gunther that Brünhild was ill.

He went to see her and asked what was wrong. But she answered nothing and lay there as if dead. Only when he pressed her more earnestly did she ask: "What did you do with the ring I gave you? I had pledged myself to the one who rode the stallion Graue with Fafner's inheritance and galloped across the Waberlohe. Siegfried rode through the flames, for he lacked no courage; he slew the Lindworm and Reigen and the five Hunding kings—but not you, Gunther, who now turns pale as a corpse; nor are you a king or a hero! I made a vow at home before my father Botel that I would love only one man, the noblest of birth, and that is Siegfried. But now I have broken my oath, for I am not his, and therefore I must advise you to kill him. I also have evil to repay to Grimhild: no heartless and wicked woman has ever been found!"

Gunther whispered, so that no one could hear: "You have uttered many poisonous words, and you are a malicious woman to

revile the lady who is far above you; nor was she dissatisfied with her lot, as you are, for she murdered no one and lives in honor!"

"I have never harbored secrets, nor committed misdeeds like Grimhild, for my nature is different: and yet I would be inclined to kill you—but do not worry about that! For you will never see me happy again in your hall—neither drinking, nor playing, nor speaking warmly, nor weaving beautiful garments of gold, nor giving you advice," said Brünhild.

She lamented as her greatest pain that she did not have Siegfried for her own; she sat up and struck her fabric so violently that it tore to pieces. Then she ordered the chamber doors to be opened, so that her lament might be heard far and wide. Then she raised a great lament, and it was heard throughout the entire castle.

Gudrun asked her maids, why they were so unhappy and sorrowful: "And what is the matter with you? Why are you behaving like people who have lost their minds? What terrifying vision has appeared to you?"

One of the women answered her: "This is a day of misfortune; our house is full of sorrow!"

Then Gudrun commanded her confidante: "Get up! We have slept long enough. Wake Brünhild; let us go to the loom and celebrate cheerfully!"

"I will not do that," replied the maid, "neither wake Brünhild nor speak to her. For many days she has drunk neither mead nor wine; the wrath of the gods has come upon her!"

Then Gudrun went to Gunther and said: "Go to her and tell her we are sorry for her misfortune."

Gunther replied, "I am forbidden to approach her or concern myself with her affairs." Nevertheless, he went to her and sought in many ways to speak with her, but received no answer. Then he spoke with Hagen and asked him to visit her. Hagen declared at once that he had no desire to do so; yet he went to her, but could

learn nothing of her condition either. Finally, Siegfried was sought out and asked to go to her. But he said not a word, and so matters remained as they were until evening.

The next day, however, when Siegfried returned from the hunt, he met Gudrun and said, "I had a premonition that something terrible must follow her resentment, for Brünhild is about to die!"

Gudrun cried out: "My lord, a most strange thing has befallen her: she has now slept for seven full days, and no one dared to wake her."

Siegfried said: "She is not sleeping at all; she is plotting evil against us."

Then Gudrun lamented through her tears: "It is a great sorrow to me to know of your death. Go to her, visit her, and see how you might calm her agitation; give her gold and thus soften her anger." Siegfried went out and found the hall open. He thought she was sleeping, drew back the curtains, and called out: "Awake, Brünhild! The sun shines over the entire castle. You've slept long enough; cast aside your sorrow and embrace joy!"

Brünhild said: "What does this audacity mean, coming to seek me out? Was there not someone worse than you in that deception?"

Siegfried asked in return: "Why do you speak to no one? What is troubling you?"

Brünnhild replied: "It is to you that I wish to express my anger!"

Siegfried said: "You are possessed if you imagine that I am hostile toward you. Yet he is your husband, the one you chose!"

"No," she cried, "Gunther never rode through the flames to me, never brought me a morning gift from the battlefield. I was surprised by the man who entered my hall, but I thought I recognized your eyes; yet I could not tell for certain through the mist that lay over my soul."

Siegfried replied: "I am no nobler a man than the sons of Gibich."

But Brünhild said: “I have much to reproach them for. Do not remind me of my pain! You, Siegfried, vanquished the serpent and rode through the fire—and for my sake! And the sons of King Gibich were not there!”

“But I was never your husband, and you were never my wife; a glorious king led you home,” replied Siegfried.

Brünhild said: “I never saw Gunther in such a way that my heart smiled at him, and I bear a grudge against him, though I hide it from others.”

“It is strange,” said Siegfried, “not to love such a king. What grieves you most of all? It seems to me that his love would be better to you than gold.”

Brünhild replied: “What pains me most in my grief is that I cannot bring myself to let a sharp sword be stained with your blood.”

Siegfried said: “Do not worry about that! You will have only a short time to wait until a sharp sword pierces my heart. Nor could you wish for anything worse, for you will not survive it: and few days of life remain for us from now on.”

“No small amount of deceit prompted those words from you, but since you have robbed me of all joy, I no longer care for life,” replied Brünhild.

Siegfried said: “Live and love King Gunther and me, and I will give you all my possessions in return for not dying!”

Brünhild replied: “You still do not fully know my nature: you stand above all men, but alas, no woman has become your wife but me!”

Siegfried said: “Something else is truer. I love you more than myself, even though I fell victim to that deception, which can no longer be undone. But every time I came to my senses, it pained me that you were not my wife. Yet I endured it as best I could, for

I still lived with you in the king's hall, and I was content that we lived together in this way. It may well be that things will turn out as has been foretold to me, and even that I shall not fear."

"You have hesitated too long to tell me that my pain affects you, but now I find no relief," replied Brünhild

Siegfried said: "I would gladly have us share a bed and for you to be my wife."

Brünhild replied: "It is futile to speak of such things; I do not wish to have two kings in one hall, and I would rather give up my life than betray King Gunther." She now recalled how they had met on the mountain and sworn oaths: "But now all that is broken, and I no longer wish to live."

"I no longer remembered your name," said Siegfried, "and did not recognize you until you were given to Gunther, and that is my greatest pain!"

But Brünhild replied: "And I swore an oath to belong to the man who rode through the billowing flames, and I will keep that oath or else die!"

"Rather than let you die, I will take you but leave Gudrun," said Siegfried, and his sides swelled so with grief that the rings of his armor shattered into pieces.

But Brünhild declared: "I want neither you nor anyone else!"

Then Siegfried walked away, just as it is said in the Siegfriedlied:

> Out strode Siegfried, away from the conversation,
> the gracious friend, and he bowed his head;
> in his pain, the rings on the sides of the steel shirt
> of the warlike man burst apart.

When Siegfried returned to the hall, Gunther asked him if he now knew what her sorrow was, and if she had regained her speech. Siegfried explained that she could speak again. Then Gunther went in to her and asked what her misfortune was and whether there was

any atonement or remedy for it. But she replied:

"I no longer wish to live, for Siegfried has betrayed me—and you no less, since you allowed him to climb into my bed. But I will not have two men in one hall, and therefore Siegfried must die—or you, or I—for now he has told Gudrun everything, and she holds it against me."

Then Brünhild went out and sat down against the wall of the women's quarters, raising a great lament, wailing that she had lost everything—both her land and her power—since she no longer had Siegfried. Once more, Gunther approached her. But she cried out: "You shall lose everything—the kingdom and my estate, your life, and me. I will return home to my relatives and sit there in mourning unless you kill Siegfried and his son as well. Never raise that young wolf!"

Gunther was deeply distressed by this and did not know what would be best for him to do: after all, he was oath-bound to Siegfried.

His thoughts wavered back and forth, but it seemed to him the greatest shame if his wife were to leave him. Then he said to himself: "Brünhild is dearest to me of all, the best of all women, and I would rather give up my life than renounce her love!"

Then he summoned his brother Hagen and said: "I am overcome by great despair!" He told him that he intended to kill Siegfried and recounted how Siegfried had betrayed his trust: "Then we shall rule over the gold and the entire kingdom."

Hagen replied: "It is unseemly to break our oath through discord; moreover, he is a great support to us. No one can match us as long as this king of the Huns lives among us. And we will never again have such a brother-in-law. Consider, too, how good it would be if we were to have nephews by him one day. But I see well how this has come to pass: Brünhild has awakened, and now her counsel brings us shame and harm."

But Gunther replied: "And yet it must be done, and I see a way:

let us provoke Guntwurm, our stepbrother; he is young and not very wise, and unbound by any oaths."

Hagen said: "This counsel seems ill-conceived to me, and if it comes to that, we will suffer retribution for having betrayed such a man."

But Gunther decided that Siegfried must die: "—or else I will die!" And he now told Brünhild to rise and be cheerful. She stood up, but said that Gunther would not share a bed with her until all this were accomplished. Now the brothers conferred. Gunther thought this would be a just cause for his death, since he had taken Brünhild's virginity: "—and let us incite Guntwurm to carry out the deed! The younger brother lacks reason."

They summoned Guntwurm and offered him gold and great dominion if he would take this upon himself. Then they caught a snake and took some wolf meat, had both boiled, and gave him some to eat, just as the skald sings:

> One roasted wolf meat,
> the other the serpent,
> and gave Guntwurm a taste of both.
> Not until then were they able,
> driven by lust for murder,
> to lay their hands on the wise hero.

Through this food and Grimhild's persuasion—and all of it combined—he became so wild and greedy that he promised to carry out this deed, and they promised him great honor in return. Siegfried had no suspicion of such treachery, for he knew he was not guilty of any such deceit against himself. Guntwurm now approached Siegfried toward morning, when he was already lying awake in his bed. But when Siegfried looked at him, Guntwurm did not dare to carry out the attack and slipped away again.

He tried again, but Siegfried's gaze was so piercing that scarcely anyone dared to meet it. When he came a third time, Siegfried had fallen asleep once more. Now Guntwurm drew his sword and

thrust it through Siegfried, so that the tip stood upright in the down pillow beneath him. Siegfried awoke from the wound, but Guntwurm fled toward the door. Then Siegfried seized the sword Gram, hurled it after him, and struck him in the back so that it cleaved Guntwurm in two at the waist: his lower half fell forward, while his head and hands fell back into the chamber.

Gudrun had fallen asleep in Siegfried's arms; she awoke abruptly, filled with unspeakable grief, as she found herself swimming in his blood. She wailed and lamented so bitterly that Siegfried rose up from the pillows and spoke to her: "Do not weep," he said, "for your father and mother are still alive, but I have a son who is far too young to defend himself against his enemies. And yet they have failed to secure their own interests: never again will they have such a brother-in-law or a nephew as Siegmund—had he lived to grow up—who rode with them in the campaign just as he did. Now what had long been prophesied has come to pass, and what we had hidden from ourselves. Yet no one can escape his fate. But the blame for all this lies with Brünhild, who loved me more than anyone else; yet I can swear that I never deceived Gunther, I honored our oaths, and I was never an overly intimate friend to his wife. But had I foreseen this and stood on my own two feet with my weapons, many more would have lost their lives, and both of them would have been slain before I fell; and it would have been harder for them to slay me than the mightiest bison or wild boar."

The king lost his life, and Gudrun gasped for breath. Then Brünhild laughed when she heard her sigh. But Gunther raged at her: "You are not laughing now because you are truly happy at heart. You are changing color! You are the great harbinger of doom. I sense that you, too, are doomed to die. That is what you deserve: to see how we slew Etzel, your brother, before your very eyes, and you would have to stand over him, just as we must now sit over our brother-in-law."

But she replied: "No one denies that there has been enough

murder now, but King Etzel cares nothing for your threats and your anger, and he will always live longer than you and be more powerful."

Hagen spoke. "Now it has come to pass just as Brünhild foretold. But there is nothing we can do to atone for this crime."

Gudrun, however, lamented: "My brothers have slain my husband! Now you will ride at the head of the army, but when battle comes, you will find that Siegfried was your fortune and your strength! And if he had many sons like him, you would still be strong through his descendants."

But no one could understand why Brünhild had demanded with laughter what she now lamented with tears; so she spoke: "I dreamed, Gunther, that I lay in a cold bed and you rode straight into the hands of your enemies. This will bring ruin upon your entire lineage, for you have broken your oaths! How little did you consider that you were mingling your blood, Siegfried and you, when you betrayed him, and you repaid him for everything he did for you and for how he yielded the precedence to you. But how he proved himself when he came to me! How faithfully he kept his oaths, for he placed between us the sharp-edged sword, the one hardened in poison. But you had already made yourselves guilty toward him and me long ago, when I was still at home and had everything I wanted, and did not think that I would become one of you when the three of you rode to court as kings. But you were no match for him. So I pledged myself to him, the son of King Siegmund, and to no other! Therefore, you shall lack nothing, even if I were to die."

Then Gunther rose and wrapped his arms around his wife's neck, begging her to stay alive and accept the estate as penance. And all the others tried to dissuade her from dying. But she pushed away everyone who came to her and said that it would be of no use to prevent her from doing what she had in mind. Now Gunther turned to Hagen and asked him for advice, begging him to go and try to see if he could soften her heart; he also said that it was now

of the utmost urgency to appease her until some time had passed.

Hagen replied: "Let no one prevent her from dying, for she has never been a source of salvation to us or to anyone else since she came here."

Brünnhild then ordered all her gold to be brought and summoned her maids who wished to receive the gifts. Then she drew a sword and thrust it into her chest beneath her arm, leaned back against the pillows, and said: "So take of the gold, whoever wishes to!"

All were silent. "So take the gold now and make good use of it!" Then she turned to Gunther: "Now I ask you, Gunther, for one last favor. Have a great pyre built in a wide field, for all of us—Siegfried and me, and those who were slain today along with him. Spread blankets over it, red with men's blood, then let this German king burn at his right hand, my men at his left—two at his head, two at his feet, plus two falcons—so that everything is evenly distributed. And between us, place our drawn sword, just as it lay back then when we climbed into bed and were, in name, like husband and wife. The gates of Valhalla will not close behind him the moment he steps through; he will ride forth with such a retinue, for our journey home will not be meager—for five maids and eight servants, whom my father gave me, will follow him, as well as those who are burning there, who were slain alongside Siegfried. I would speak more, were I not wounded; my voice is fading, my wounds are swelling—yet I spoke only the truth!"

Now Siegfried's body was interred according to ancient custom, and a great pyre was erected. It was set ablaze, and upon it were laid the bodies of Siegfried, the dragon-slayer; his three-winter-old son, whom Brünhild had had killed; and Guntwurm.

As the pyre blazed brightly, Brünhild also climbed up and urged her maids to take only the gold she wished to give them. Then she died and burned with Siegfried: thus both their lives came to an end.

Everyone who hears this tale must say that there was no man on earth like him, and none will ever be born again, as Siegfried was in every way; and his name will never fade from the German tongue, nor from the northern lands, as long as the world endures.

Now it is told that one day Gudrun sat in her chamber and spoke to herself. "My life was better when I still had Siegfried: he towered above all men, like gold above iron, like the noble Edellauch among the grass, like the stag among other beasts, until my brothers begrudged me such a man, who was the first among all men. They could not sleep peacefully until they had murdered him. Graue cried out loudly when he knew his master had been wounded. I spoke to him as if he were a man, but he bowed his head to the ground: he knew that Siegfried had fallen."

Gudrun then fled into the forest; everywhere around her she heard the howling of wolves, but it seemed to her that death would come easily. She wandered until she came to the hall of King Half, Siegfried's stepfather, and remained there with Thora, the daughter of King Hakon of Denmark, for seven half-years, and was well cared for there.

Thora set up a loom for her, and Gudrun wove upon it many heroic deeds and beautiful battle scenes, as was customary in those days: swords and shields and all manner of armor, Siegmund's ships as they set sail from the shore, and she embroidered the battles between Sieggeier and Siegar in the south on Funen; such was her joy, and she brooded less on her sorrow.

Grimhild learned where Gudrun had gone, summoned her sons for a discussion, and asked them how they now intended to make amends to Gudrun for her son and husband, saying that they owed her as much. Gunther replied that he was willing to offer her gold and thus atone for her sorrow.

The Gibichs then sent for their friends and readied their horses, helmets, shields, swords, and armor, along with all other military equipment. This journey to Gudrun was prepared with the utmost

splendor, and no warrior of any standing remained at home.

Their horses were decked out in armor, and every rider wore a golden helmet or at least one that was polished to a mirror-like shine. Grimhild also set out on the journey, for she declared that the undertaking would succeed fully only if she herself did not remain at home.

They had a total of five hundred men with them, including noblemen such as Waldemar of Denmark, Egmund, and Jarlsleib. They reached King Half's hall and met there with Lombards, Franks, and Saxons; these men marched in full battle armor and had thrown red fur coats over their shoulders, as the song says:

> In light armor, helmets pulled down
> over reddish-blond hair, and in red tunics.

Gunther and Hagen now wished to present their sister Gudrun with precious gifts and spoke kindly to her, but she trusted none of them. Then her mother, Grimhild, gave her a treacherous, enchanted potion, and as soon as she had drunk it, she no longer remembered any grievance.

In this potion were mixed the power of the earth, the ice-cold sea, and blood as atonement. But on the horn were carved runes of every kind and reddened with blood, as the song says.

> In the horn were mixed with the power of the earth
> the ice-cold sea and the ray of the southern sun;
> there was also much bitterness in the brew:
> grains, herbs, and roasted kernels;
> ashes from the hearth; the entrails of the sacrifice;
> and, to soothe the pain, a pig's liver.

When they had now come to an agreement, there was great joy. Grimhild embraced Gudrun and spoke to her.

"May all go well with you, my daughter! Behold, I give you gold and jewels of every kind; take them from your father's inheritance —precious rings and tapestries woven by the maidens of Heun,

which are the most beautiful of all. Let this atone for your husband. But now you shall marry King Etzel, Brünhilde's brother, that mighty man; then you may rule over and enjoy his wealth. Do not forsake your blood relatives for the sake of one man, but rather do as we ask."

But Gudrun replied: "Never will I take King Etzel, and it is not wise to increase the line of either our families."

Grimhild pressed her: "Think no more of the strife now, and behave as if Siegfried and Siegmund, your son, were still alive, should you bear sons by Etzel."

Gudrun said: "Never can I forget him who was the finest of all men!"

Grimhild replied: "Etzel is the best match for you; you cannot take anyone else."

Gudrun said: "Oh, do not offer me this king as a husband, for he will surely bring nothing but misfortune upon our line; he will cause nothing but harm to your sons because of Brünhild, and the stench of it will be terrible!"

Grimhild took offense at these remarks because of her sons and said: "Do as we ask, and in return you shall receive great honor and our love, as well as the two estates known as Weinberg and Walburg." And her words carried such weight that it could not be otherwise.

"So it must be, though against my will, and all this will bring us less joy than sorrow," replied Gudrun.

Soon afterward, when Etzel's embassy had arrived, the men mounted their horses, the women were lifted into the wagons, and thus they traveled seven days by land, another seven days by ship, and the third seven days again by land, until they arrived at King Etzel's high hall. A great crowd went out to meet Gudrun there.

A splendid banquet had been prepared, as had been previously

agreed upon in messages exchanged between Etzel and the Gibichs, and everything proceeded with honors and great decorum. At this banquet, Etzel drank the bridal toast with Gudrun, but her heart could never bring itself to smile at him, and their life together was not a happy one.

Etzel and Gudrun had two sons together. The story goes on to say that, long afterward, King Etzel awoke from his sleep one night and spoke to Gudrun. "I just dreamed that you pierced me with a sword."

Gudrun interpreted the dream, saying that dreaming of iron signified fire—"and the delusion that you think yourself higher than everyone else!"

Etzel continued: "I also dreamed that two reeds were growing here, and I absolutely did not want to cut them, when they were torn up by the roots and stained red with blood, carried to the tables, and offered to me to eat. I also dreamed that two hawks flew from my hand, but returned empty-handed and flew to Hel. Then it seemed to me that I saw their hearts mixed with honey, and it felt as though I were eating them. Again, it seemed to me as if two beautiful puppies were lying at my feet, howling loudly, and I ate their corpses against my will."

Gudrun spoke. "Your dreams are not good, and things will turn out as they foretell: your sons are doomed, and many hardships will yet befall us."

"I also dreamed," concluded Etzel, "I was lying in bed and my death had been decreed."

But that, too, passed, and their relationship remained loveless. King Etzel was a powerful king, violent but shrewd, and he had a great many subjects. He often wondered where all the gold that Siegfried had possessed had gone, and that only Gunther and Hagen knew about it. He told himself, that the brothers possessed more riches than anyone could possibly rival. So he consulted with his chief commanders on how to proceed in order to get his hands

on the gold, and finally decided to send a message to Gudrun's brothers, inviting them to a banquet and honoring them in various ways. The leader of these men was named Schwing.

The queen learned of the secret arrangements and immediately suspected that it was a plot against her brothers. She then carved runes onto a staff, took a gold ring, wrapped it in wolf's hair, and handed both to Schwing. The messengers set out at Etzel's command, and when they came ashore, Schwing examined the runes and altered them so that it appeared as though Gudrun were using the runes to encourage the brothers to avenge Etzel. Soon they arrived at Gunther's hall. They were warmly received, and great fires were kindled before them.

There they merrily drank the finest mead. Then Schwing rose and announced: "King Etzel has sent me to you! He wishes for you to visit him with great honors and to receive great honors from him; as well as helmets and shields, swords and armor, gold and fine garments, soldiers and horses, and a great fief; and, he says, he would most gladly grant you his kingdom and dominion."

Then Gunther shook his head and said to Hagen: "What are we to make of this offer? Etzel offers us great dominion, but I know of no king as rich as we are, for we possess all the gold that lay on the Lower Heath, and we also have our own great treasuries full of treasures, the finest bladed weapons, and all manner of military equipment: I know I have the finest stallion, the sharpest sword, and the finest gold!"

Hagen replied: "I am surprised by his message, for he has never done this before, and it would be unwise to journey to him. I was also surprised—when I saw the gifts that Etzel sent us—to find a wolf's hair tied around a gold ring, and it may be that Gudrun thinks Etzel harbors wolfish intentions toward us, and she does not want us to go."

Finally, Schwing presented the runes, which, as he said, had been sent by Gudrun. Then the rest of the company went to sleep.

Gunther and Hagen, however, continued drinking with a few men. Then Hagen's wife, Kostbare, stepped forward and examined the runes; she was the loveliest of women; Lustbare, Gunther's wife, was also present—a woman of distinction. Both poured drinks, and the kings were soon very drunk. Schwing noticed this and enticed them:

"It cannot be denied that King Etzel has become very sluggish and too old to defend his kingdom; his sons, however, are still young and incapable of anything. Now he would like to grant you authority over his kingdom while they are still young; but he grants you, above all, the privilege of enjoying it."

Now both circumstances were true: on the one hand, Gunther was very drunk and a great kingdom was being offered to him; on the other, he could not fight against his fate. In short, he promised to make the journey and told Hagen, his brother.

Hagen replied: "Your promise must now stand, and I will follow you; but I am reluctant to go on this journey."

When all the men had drunk their fill and gone to sleep, Kostbare began to examine the runes. She had the rods brought to her and found that something different was carved on them than what had originally been written beneath them—that the runes had been forged. Yet her wisdom enabled her to distinguish the runes nonetheless. Then she also went to bed with her husband.

But when she awoke in the morning, she said to Hagen: "You want to leave home? But it is unwise; you'd better go another time! You do not understand runes clearly if you think that this time Gudrun, your sister, has invited you. I read the runes, and it surprises me that such a wise woman would have carved them so confusingly. But at the bottom it said first, as if your death depended on it. And so it is: either she omitted a rune, or others have forged it. And now you shall hear my dreams. I dreamed that a raging torrent burst in here and tore down all the posts in the hall."

But he replied: “You women are often full of evil forebodings, but it is not my way to show suspicion toward a man unless he gives cause for it: Etzel will surely welcome us.”

She said: “You will find out: friendship will not follow this invitation. I further dreamed that another body of water rushed in here and roared terribly. It overturned all the benches and broke both of your feet, brothers.”

“That must mean something!” Hagen replied: “There are fields rippling where you imagine water; when we walk across fields, large stalks of grain often prick our legs.”

“And I dreamed,” she said, “that your bedsheet was burning and the flames were blazing in the hall.”

"He replied: “I know for certain what that is. My clothes are lying carelessly scattered about there; they will burn in the fire where you thought the sheet was.”

“It seemed to me,” she continued, “that a bear came in, tore down the king’s hunting blind, and shook its paws so violently that we all were seized with fear. Suddenly, it had us all in its jaws, so that we could do nothing, and great terror arose.”

He replied: “A great storm is approaching, which appeared to you as a polar bear.”

“It seemed to me,” she concluded, “that an eagle flew in and along the hall, splashing me and all of us with blood, and it felt to me as if it were Etzel’s spirit.”

“That will mean something terrible!” He replied: “Slaughter often takes place, and we slay mighty cattle for our joy: when we dream of eagles, it signifies oxen. Etzel’s loyalty remains steadfast toward us.”

With that, they broke off the conversation. Now it must be said of Günther that the same topic was being discussed when they awoke, and Lustbare, his wife, recounted her many dreams, all of

which seemed to her to portend treachery. But Gunther interpreted them all to mean the opposite.

"This was one of them," Lustbare began, "in which I dreamed that a bloody sword was carried into the hall and you were pierced by that sword, and wolves howled at both ends of the sword."

But he said: "It is small dogs that are always eager to bite; often, bloodstained weapons signify the yapping of dogs!"

She said: "Then it seemed to me that women were coming in here; they were terrifying, and yet they chose you as their husband; perhaps they were your guardian spirits."

He replied: "It is hard to say: no one can escape their fate, and it is not unlikely that we will not live long."

That very morning, Gunther and Hagen jumped up and wanted to set out, but the women advised them against it. Gunther called out to his cupbearer and said: "Arise, Labmann, pour us good wine from large jugs, for it may well be that this is our last feast: now the old wolf will come for our gold when we die, and the bear, too, will not fail to sink his fangs into it."

The women and all the servants saw them off, weeping. But Hagen's youngest son said: "Farewell, and may you have a safe journey!"

Most of the men stayed behind, but Zoller and Schneewart, Hagen's sons, and a mighty warrior named Seehund—a brother of Kostbares—set out with them. The women and the court servants followed the kings to the ships and tried to dissuade them from the journey, but it was to no avail.

Then Lustbare said: "Schwing, It is likely that great misfortune will arise from your coming and that unusual things will happen on this journey."

He replied: "I swear that I am not lying! May a tall gallows and all the fiends take me if I lie even a single word!" And he did not

hold back with such words.

Kostbare said: "Then sail on in peace and may you have a safe journey!"

Hagen called back: "Be cheerful, whatever may befall us!"

With that, they parted, as fate would have it. They now rowed so furiously in their anger and with such great force that the keel broke halfway away from the ship. They threw themselves backward onto the oars with such a violent jolt, that the oarlocks and oar sockets shattered, and when they reached land, they did not moor their ship but let it drift. They rode for a long time through a dark forest. Then, all at once, they saw King Etzel's castle and heard a great clamour and the clang of weapons. Now they also noticed a multitude of men and extensive preparations everywhere, at which they were busily working; the castle gates were also manned by warriors, and when they reached them, they were locked. But Hagen broke open the gate, and they rode inside.

Then Schwing said to Hagen: "You'd better have left that undone! Wait here a moment while I find you a gallows tree: I invited you here with kindness, but deceit lay behind it. You'll only have to wait a short while before you're hanged!"

Hagen replied: "We will not yield to you, and I think we'll hardly bow down where men are meant to fight. You're not fit to frighten us, and may it go ill with you!"

With that, they knocked him down and hacked him to death with their battle-axes. They rode forward to the king's hall, where King Etzel had already gathered his retinue around him for battle, and his ranks maneuvered in such a way that a protected space remained between Etzel and the brothers.

"Welcome," cried Etzel. "Hand over to me the great store of gold that is rightfully ours—the hoard that Siegfried possessed and which now belongs to Gudrun."

Gunther replied, "You shall never receive the hoard! And you

shall first face capable men before we give up our lives, if you offer us hostility. It may well be that you have prepared this feast in grand style, with the utmost extravagance, for vultures and wolves!"

"For a long time now," said Etzel, "I have had it in mind to take your lives, so that I myself may rule over the gold and thus reward you for the treacherous deed of murdering your noble brother-in-law."

Now I will avenge him!" Hagen replied: "It works against you that you have been brooding over this plan for so long, yet are still unprepared." Already the quarrel had erupted into a fierce battle with projectiles.

The news reached Gudrun immediately. When she heard it, she was deeply saddened, cast off her cloak, and hurried outside. She greeted the new arrivals, kissed her brothers, and showed them her love. And it was to be her last farewell to them. She said: "I thought I had prevented you from coming, but no one can escape their fate. Can it still do any good to seek reconciliation?"

But they all shook their heads sharply. Now, seeing how cruelly her brothers were being treated, she thought only of harsh necessity, donned a suit of armor, took up a sword, and fought alongside her brothers. Thus she led the charge like the boldest warrior. In this, all agreed that scarcely had a better defense ever been seen.

Many men fell, but the battle raged on and lasted long past noon. Gunther and Hagen pressed into Etzel's ranks, and it is said that the entire field ran red with blood; Hagen's sons, too, fought bravely.

Etzel cried out: "We had a large and imposing host, mighty warriors, but now many of us have already fallen: thus we must repay you with evil! You have slain nineteen of my men, and only eleven remain."

Then the fighting fell silent, and Etzel continued: "We were four brothers, and I alone am still alive. I entered into a powerful alliance by marriage with you, and thought it would be to my advantage. I had a wife, beautiful and wise, generous and high-spirited, but her wisdom was of no use to me, for we were rarely in agreement. Now you have slain many of my relatives and deprived me of Siegfried's land and estate. But that you have betrayed Brünhild, my sister—that grieves me most of all."

Hagen replied: "How can you claim such a thing! You were the first to break the peace, and that was unworthy of a king! But it strikes me as ridiculous that you should list your grievances here. And I will thank the gods that you are now in such a sorry state."

Once more, King Etzel spurred his men on to launch a fierce assault. They fought with great ferocity, but the Gibichs drove them back so powerfully that King Etzel was forced to retreat into the hall. There they continued to fight a most bitter battle with much bloodshed, but it ended with the entire retinue of the brothers falling, and in the end only they remained standing. Yet many a man still fell by their weapons.

Etzel's men now attacked King Gunther in particular, and he was captured by the overwhelming force and placed in chains. In the end, only Hagen fought on with great bravery and manliness, felling still a few of Etzel's finest men, and thrusting several into the fire that had been kindled in the hall. All agreed that such a man would be hard to find again. In the end, he too was overpowered by the crowd and bound.

King Etzel then said: "It was truly mighty how so many men perished by his hand." But then he asked King Gunther if he would hand over the gold, otherwise he would have to forfeit his life.

Gunther replied: "First I want to see my brother Hagen's heart, still bloody."

Then Etzel went to Hagen and commanded: "Now cut out his heart; that shall be his death."

Hagen answered: "Do as you please, Etzel; I will cheerfully await whatever you may do. You will see that my heart is not timid. I have endured many a harsh trial before, and I gladly proved my manly courage when I was still unharmed; but now I am gravely wounded, and you alone must decide my fate."

One of King Etzel's men spoke: "I see a better course of action: Let us rather seize Schwatzmann, the servant, that soulless wretch, and spare Hagen's heart. No matter how long he lived, he would always remain wretched."

When the servant heard this, he cried out loudly and ran to where he thought he could hide, lamenting that he had to suffer from their discord and pay the price for everything; he wailed that it would be an unlucky day if he were to die while still in his good service as a swineherd. But they seized him and raised their knives above him. He cried out loudly, even before he felt the blade.

But Hagen then said what few would do if they were in dire straits; he wanted to save the servant's life and explained that he could not bear to hear his screams, adding that it would be easier for him to face this ordeal himself. They cut out the servant's heart, however, and brought it before King Gunther.

But the king cried out: "I see here the heart of Schwätzer, the fool—unlike the heart of Hagen, the bold—for it trembles far too much now that you bring it on the platter, many times more than when he carried it in his breast." Then, at Etzel's command, they went to Hagen and cut out his heart.

But so great was his strength that he laughed while enduring this torment. Everyone marveled at his defiance, and the memory of it has remained ever since.

They then showed Gunther Hagen's heart, and he said: "Now I have the heart of Hagen the Bold, unlike the heart of Schwätzer the Fool; it trembles very little, but it trembled even less when he carried it in his chest. But so you, Etzel, will lose your life, just as we are now losing ours. Now I alone know where the hoard of gold

lies, and even Hagen can no longer say. My mind was still uncertain when the two of us were still alive, but now I alone must decide, let the Rhine now rule over the gold, before the Huns carry it in their hands."

Etzel commanded: "Take the captive away!" And so it happened. Gudrun now called upon men to bear witness, stepped before Etzel, and said: "May it now befall you, wickedly and thereafter, just as you kept your word against me and my brothers."

King Gunther was thrown, with his hands bound, into a pit of snakes; there were many vipers in it. Gudrun had a harp brought to him, and he displayed his art, striking the strings with his toes and playing so beautifully and powerfully that few believed they had ever heard it played better with the hands. He continued this masterful performance for a long time, until all the vipers fell asleep. Yet one viper, large and hideous, crept toward him, and sank its fangs into him until it pierced his heart. Only then did Gunther give up his life with great heroism.

King Etzel now believed he had won a great victory and spoke to Gudrun—both to mock her and as if to boast: "Gudrun," he said, "you have now lost your brothers, but you yourself are to blame."

She replied: "It pleases you to tell me of this murder, but it may well be that you will regret it when you learn what follows. The inheritance will remain with me the longest—not to mention Grimm's. You shall not have it easy as long as I live!"

He said: "We'd better make peace, and I'll make amends to you for your brothers with gold and precious jewels, as you wish."

She replied: "For a long time now, I haven't been at ease in your company, yet I could still manage because my brothers were still alive. And you'll never make amends for my brothers in a way that would satisfy me. But we women are often crushed by your violence. Now all my relatives are dead, and you alone can decide my fate. So I must accept things as they are. Let us prepare a great

feast: I will hold a funeral feast for my brothers, and you for your relatives."

Thus she spoke kindly, though in truth she remained the same within; but he was easily persuaded and trusted her because she spoke so freely. Gudrun now held the funeral feast for her brothers, and Etzel did the same for his relatives, and the festivities were lively and boisterous. There she reflected on her sorrow and pondered how she might inflict some great humiliation upon King Etzel. And toward evening, she seized her two sons—whom she had borne to King Etzel—as they were playing around the pillars of the high seat, and led them away. The boys were taken aback and asked what was to become of them. But she said: "Oh, ask no questions! You must both die now."

They replied: "You may do with your children as you please; no one can stop you, but it is a disgrace for you to carry this out."

Whereupon she slit their throats. King Etzel, however, later inquired where his sons were. Gudrun replied: "Now I will tell you, and your heart will not rejoice. You aroused such great anger in me when you slew my brothers, and now you shall hear my answer: You have lost your sons!"

Their skulls are being used here as drinking cups, and you yourself drank their blood mixed with wine from them! Then I took their hearts and roasted them on a spit, and you ate them!"

King Etzel said: "You are cruel to have murdered your own children and given me their flesh to eat, and your misdeeds follow one after another!"

Gudrun replied: "It is my will to inflict even greater shame upon you, for no misfortune can be severe enough for a king such as you."

The king said: "You have done worse than any example known to mankind. Your folly is as great as your hard-heartedness. You deserve to be burned at the stake, but first to be stoned to death.

That is what awaits you."

She replied: "Predict that for yourself. But I will choose a different death." And so they exchanged many more angry words.

The king had been drinking and went to sleep toward evening. When he had fallen asleep, Gudrun came in to him. She took a sword and thrust it into King Etzel's chest. He awoke from the wound and said, "Here, no bandage and no aid are needed anymore. Who committed this crime?"

Gudrun replied, "I did it!"

Etzel said, "It was not fitting for you to do this, even if there were many reasons for it; yet you were wedded to me and acted on the counsel of your own kin. As a dowry, I gave you thirty excellent retainers and noble maidservants and many other servants, but you were not satisfied unless you ruled over all the lands that Botel, my father, possessed."

Gudrun replied: "You have spoken many wrongs, but I pay them no heed. True, I was aloof by nature, but you made it even worse. There was often great strife at your court; friends and relatives fought one another, and one was an enemy to the other. My life was better when I was still with Siegfried. Then I lost him. But that was still a small matter—to bear the name of a widow. What grieved me even more was that I came to you, having previously had the mightiest of kings. You, however, never emerged from battle without having come off worse."

He said: "That is untrue. Yet such reproaches do nothing to improve our lot, which we have both diminished. Now deal with me as befits us, and have my body buried with honor."

She promised him: "I will do that and prepare a worthy grave for you in a mighty stone coffin; I will lay you in fine shrouds and see to everything that is needed."

Then he died; and she did as she had promised. But then she had fire thrown into the hall, and when the court folk awoke in

terror, the men, not wishing to suffer death in the flames, killed themselves in the struggle and thus met their end. Thus ended the lives of King Etzel and his entire retinue.

According to popular belief, the Wälsungs and the Gibichs were the most spirited and mighty of men, and so it is said in all the old songs as well. Thus the events came to an end, and the strife ceased.

Gudrun, too, no longer wished to live after this deed. But her final day was not yet to come. She hurried to the sea, gathered stones in her bosom, leaped into the water, and sought to take her own life. Then high waves swept her away, and their force carried her far from the coast until she reached the land of King Jonak.

He was a mighty king over a great people and took Gudrun as his wife. He had a son with her named Erp; Hamedich and Sarlo, however, were Jonak's sons by another mother.

Schwanhild, the daughter Gudrun had borne to Siegfried, as mentioned earlier, also grew up there. She was the fairest of all women and, like her father, had such radiant eyes that few dared to look beneath her brows. She surpassed all other women in beauty just as the sun surpasses the other heavenly bodies.

Ermanrich was known as a mighty king in those days. He summoned his son Weihrand for a conversation and said to him: "You shall ride on a mission for me to King Jonak, and my counselor Sibich shall accompany you. There lives Schwanhild, the daughter of Siegfried, the dragon-slayer, and I know her to be the fairest maiden under the sun. She is the one I desire most, and you shall ask for her hand on my behalf."

Weihrand replied: "It is my duty, my lord, to carry your message." Then the king had the journey splendidly prepared.

They rode on until they came to King Jonak. They saw Schwanhild, and her beauty struck them as exceedingly great. Weihrand stepped before the king and said: "King Ermanrich, my father wishes to offer you his kinship; he has heard of Schwanhild

and wishes to choose her as his wife."

"It is unlikely that she could be given to a man of greater standing than he is." King Jonak replied, "That would be a worthy marriage: King Ermanrich is very famous."

Only Gudrun raised an objection: "Fortune is fickle; he cannot be trusted. May she not come to regret it!"

But with the king's approval and all the other factors in its favor, this marriage was decided upon, and Schwanhild soon set sail for King Ermanrich with a sizeable escort.

She sat on the aft deck together with the king's son. Then Sibich spoke to Weihrand: "It would be more fitting if you had such a pleasing wife and not such an old man." This pleased him in his heart, and he spoke to Schwanhild with kindness, and they exchanged pleasantries.

So they returned home to King Ermanrich. Then Sibich said to him: "It befits you, my lord, to know what is afoot, though it is difficult to reveal; but this is his deceit—that your son has enjoyed Schwanhild's full favor, and she is his lover. Do not let this go unpunished."

Sibich had already given the king many false pieces of advice, though this was the worst of them all. The king usually followed his wicked counsel and ordered—unable to restrain his anger—that his son be seized and hanged on the gallows. When Weihrand was led to the gallows, he had a falcon brought to him and plucked all its feathers. Then he ordered that the falcon be shown to his father in that state.

When King Ermanrich saw the featherless falcon, he said: "From this I can see that I appear to him just as stripped of all honor as this falcon is of its feathers." And he ordered that he be taken down from the gallows. But Sibich had zealously pursued the matter, and Weihrand was already dead.

Indeed, Sibich goaded the king even further: "You must be

angrier at no one than at Schwanhild. Let her die in disgrace as well."

The king replied, "I will take your advice." Thereupon, Schwanhild was bound and laid beneath the castle gate, and they charged at her on horseback. But when she gouged out her own eyes, the horses dared not trample her. Sibich saw this and ordered that a sack be pulled over her head. So it was done, and only then did she give up her life.

Gudrun heard of Schwanhild's death and rebuked her sons, saying: "How can you sit here so calmly and exchange jests, when Ermanrich killed your sister and had her shamefully trampled under the hooves of horses? You do not have the same spirit as Gunther and Hagen, who would avenge their blood relative!"

Hamedich replied: "You did not praise Gunther and Hagen much once, when they slew Siegfried for you and you were drenched in his blood. Your own act of brotherly vengeance was far too terrible, too, when you killed your sons, for together with them we could now better slay King Ermanrich. Yet we will not endure his taunts any longer, so greatly are we provoked."

Then Gudrun walked over, laughing, and gave them drink from large goblets. Then she selected for them strong and sturdy spears and other weapons of war. But as they parted, Hamedich said: "Here we part for the last time, and you will soon hear news of us, and then you may hold our memorial service along with Schwanhild's!"

With that, they went on their way. But Gudrun, filled with sorrow, entered her chamber and said to herself: "I was married to three men; first to Siegfried the Dragon-Slayer, and he was betrayed—that was my greatest sorrow! Then I was given to Etzel, but my heart was so filled with bitterness toward him that, in my rage, I killed our children. Then I threw myself into the sea, but the waves carried me back ashore, and there I became King Jonak's wife. Finally, I sent Schwanhild away from the country with great

wealth, and this is my deepest sorrow after Siegfried's death—that she was trampled under the hooves of the horses at Rosseshufen, and the most bitter of all was that Gunther was thrown into the snake pit, but the hardest of all was that Hagen's heart was cut from his living body. It would be best if Siegfried came to meet me from Valhalla and took me with him, for here there is now no son or daughter left to comfort me! Do you remember, Siegfried, what we spoke of when we climbed into bed—that you would one day come from Hel and bring me home?"

Thus ended Gudrun's lament. Now it must be told of Hamedich and Sarlo that Gudrun had enchanted their armor and weapons so that no iron could pierce them. She had also commanded them not to harm themselves with stones or other dangerous objects that might injure them, and that they must fight in silence; she told them that Hamedich and Sarlo were to cut off his hands and feet, but Erp his head, and that it would be their doom if they did not do so.

After they had been on their way for a while, they came upon their stepbrother Erp, who had already set out ahead of them, and asked what the little fellow actually intended to do to help them.

He replied: "Just as the hand helps the foot, or the foot helps the foot." That seemed to them to be of no use—the hand helping the foot, or the foot helping the foot. Erp rocked back and forth on his horse's back and said, "It's too hard to show fools the way."

So they harshly called him the son of a harlot, and since they were very angry that his mother had sent them away with harsh words, they wanted to do what would please her least of all, and they killed Erp, because she loved him the most.

They continued on their way, and not long afterward, Hamedich stumbled, but he stretched out his hand, supported himself on it, and said, "Erp must have been right: I would have fallen now if I hadn't supported myself with my hands."

Soon after, Sarlo stumbled with one foot, but braced himself on

the other, remained standing upright, and said: "I would have fallen now if I hadn't braced myself on both feet." They now realized that they had acted foolishly toward their brother Erp. They continued on until they reached King Ermanrich's castle. They went inside and immediately attacked him.

Hamedich cut off both his arms, and Sarlo cut off both his feet. Then Hamedich cried out: "His head would be off by now if Erp were still alive—our brother whom we slew along the way. We realized that too late!" But Sarlo replied, just as the song says:

> It was not wise, brother, to let your tongue run loose;
> Much trouble comes from a loose tongue!
> You would have a heart, Hamedich,
> if only you had a mind as well:
> Much is lacking in the man who lacks natural wit.

And in this, too, they had transgressed their mother's commandment, for they had defiled the stones with their brother's blood. Now King Ermanrich's men attacked the brothers. But they defended themselves well and valiantly and inflicted harm on many a man, while no blade pierced them.

Then a man stepped into the hall—tall but already elderly, with only one eye—and spoke: "You do not resemble wise men, since you do not know how to put these two to death."

King Ermanrich cried out: "Then give us counsel, if you can!"

The old man replied: "Cast them with stones into Hel, if iron cannot harm them!"

And so it came to pass. Then stones flew at them from all sides, and that brought Hamedich and Sarlo to their deaths. Then the old man vanished; but it had been Wotan himself.

PROVERBS

For Hildegard.

Before the beginning of the world was Allfather's knowledge
From whence he came, there he returns

THE HOST

Hail to the giver, a guest has arrived!
Where shall he sit in the hall?
For he who is traveling
and must first seek his advantage is not very patient.
He who comes from the road needs warmth
and is cold, with trembling knees:
Give food and dry clothes to the man
who has wandered far over the mountains.
He who needs washing, to whom you give hospitality,
needs a towel and a warm welcome.
Treat him politely, if you hope to receive
and deeds of recompense.
Be cheerful as a host and friendly to your guest,
then you will also provide wisely for yourself;
Good words and silence increase your reputation:
Everyone is glad to thank the kind.

WITH STRANGERS AND GUESTS

Do not rise at night, nor go out of your house,
except in case of necessity or to look around;
Then do not drive the stranger away from the gate with scolding,
but give gladly to the needy.
Do not treat the traveling man or stranger with scorn and ridicule
for you do not always guess correctly and you err greatly
when you find guests of noble birth.
Do not make a mockery of the man
who has come to you as a guest;
The wise man is easily deceived by the fool.
It seems wise to those who are not questioned
to sit at home with dry skin.
The hook must be strong that turns forever
to give entry to the whole world;

And if you push the bolt, the swarm of beggars
will wish you only harm and evil.

THE VALUE OF LIFE

The living live, even if they live in poverty:
"The living will still get to the cow!"
Fire and smoke rose from the roof of the rich man's house,
and he himself lay dead at the gate.
The living rejoice in the flames of the hearth
and in the light of the sun,
and, if possible, in the health of their bodies
and in a long life without vice.
No one is completely miserable, even if he is sick:
He was blessed with sons,
Another with friends, the third with cattle,
The fourth with valuable works.
For the lame still rides, the handless becomes a shepherd,
The deaf is still fit for battle,
Better even to be blind than burned to ashes:
Only the dead are completely useless.

MODERATE WISDOM

Let a man preserve moderate wisdom,
let him not desire to be too wise:
He who truly knows what he knows
will have an easier life.
Let a man preserve moderate wisdom,
let him not desire to be too wise:
The heart of a wise man is rarely happy,
for he has experienced too much.
Let a man preserve moderate wisdom,
let him not desire to be too wise:
Let no one try to see his fate,
else his mind will be darkened with worry.

ON CONVERSATION

As fire burns on fire until all is burned
and flame kindles flame,
so man grows by conversation with men:
In secret he would remain stupid.
He who speaks too much and conceals nothing
speaks vain and useless words;
with a chattering tongue that runs unbridled,
many have brought harm upon themselves.
The unwise would do best to remain silent
in the company of wiser men,
for no one knows how foolish he is
unless he betrays himself by his talk.
Of course, those who know little do not know
when to keep silent.

CAUTION

Be on your guard, but not without reason,
be cautious but not fearful:
First of wine, second of women,
third of deceitful thieves.
Those who are confident in what they say and ask
can be considered wise,
but trust only one, for two are bad,
and the whole world knows it when there are three.
Therefore, be cautious and watch carefully
at the gate of your trust;
a word spoken innocently to another
has already caused many a man grief and sorrow.
Do not fall asleep, do not hold on to the hatred of old quarrels,
for revenge sleeps restlessly;
A man must defend himself with wisdom and weapons
to keep his hands and head.

JUSTIFICATION

If you find a friend whom you trust completely
and want to gain his love,
share your feelings and enthusiasm with him
and hurry to visit him often.
But if you find someone whom you trust little
and he only wants to gain advantage,
Then speak only kindly with hostile intent
and repay him with lies.
And if you know another whom you trust little,
and his thoughts seem suspicious to you,
Smile in his face and lead him astray:
Retribution shall be equal to the gift.

BAD COMPANY

From bad companions you will never receive thanks
or reward for your kindness,
But the praise of a good man is easily won
and makes one popular with people.
Three words are not worth the trouble
to argue with a taunting troublemaker,
So do not engage in tiresome chatter
and do not exchange words with fools,
for otherwise the nobler man easily succumbs
to the taunts of the lesser rogue.

CHARITY

I lent my garment to a pair of straw men
to scare the birds from the field,
for clothed, the warriors seemed equal:
only the naked man believes himself despised.
Never rejoice in the misfortune of others,
on the contrary, turn it to good:

Where you have recognized need, take care of it
and then give peace even to your enemies.
Pour a drink for the departed
and wash his head and hands,
Let him rest in the chamber, cleansed, combed
and blessed be his sleep.

BLESSING OF WORK

Wake early, he who has few workers,
so that they may supervise their work,
for much is lost by those who sleep in the morning:
he who is quick is already half won.
For dry logs and shingles for the roof
let the man note the measurements,
and also for the pile of wood that everyone needs
for warmth in the winter months.
For sleep is sweet to those who have made provisions,
even in the harshest autumn,
When the weather changes five times a day
and many times more in a month.

SELF-RESTRAINT

Do not play the cobbler, nor make a spear,
unless it is for yourself;
The shaft will easily become crooked
and the shoes too small
and you will reap only ingratitude for all your efforts.
A man of understanding will always use his power
with moderation and prudence,
For he must soon find those who make enemies:
He will not remain the first for long.

AT THE COURT

Ride clean and well fed to court,
There is no need for the best clothes;
Do not be ashamed of your shoes and trousers,
Nor of your horse, even if it is not a good one.
As the eagle stretches its head
longingly towards the shore,
so should the man in court
before the crowd of people
who finds no advocate anywhere.

PRAISE OF PROPERTY

At my own hearth, however poor it may be,
I am still master in my house.
A thatched roof over my head, two goats in the stable,
are still better than begging.
At my own hearth, however poor it may be,
I am still master in my house;
The heart bleeds of him who must go begging
for his midday meal.

OPINION OF THE WORLD

Blessed is he who has earned
much praise and much love from men in this world
But both remain forever an uncertain good,
because we owe them to others.
Blessed, therefore, is he who conquers
the spark of reason for his life,
For man must learn from evil experience
when speech and advice come only from others.

STEADFASTNESS

Do not look back in the turmoil of battle,
lest terror turn you into a pig.
Look firmly into the face of danger and the enemy,
then no shameful spell will compel you.
A man needs eyes full of prudence
when he hastens to battle,
for cunning sorceresses lie in wait
to blunt his steel and his understanding.

FRIEND AND FOE

You should always be friendly to your friends
and repay gifts with gifts,
but return scorn with scorn
and repay lies with lies.
You should always be friendly to your friends,
and likewise to your friends' friends,
but you should only be hostile to your enemies,
and likewise to your enemies' friends.

DISTRUST

Like two things that stand together, tongue and head
and yet one strikes the other,
so do not trust the man under his cloak,
nor the hand he secretly hides there.
Do not trust too much in the early sowing in the field,
nor in the early wisdom of a child;
sowing needs time and a son needs education,
both of which are uncertain things.

ON GIVING GIFTS

There is no man so kind and hospitable
that he himself does not like to receive gifts.
No owner has ever given away his property so carelessly
that he would be sorry for the reward.
It is easy to live a kind and generous life,
for such a man is not troubled by worries.
The miser, however, comes to no enjoyment,
for he is stingy with himself.
The gift need not be large,
for often the smallest gift buys gratitude;
with a half-empty cup and dry bread
I have won good companions.
Never be shy about giving away the wealth you have acquired
from your own labor;
otherwise you save for the suffering what you intended for your loved ones,
for things often turn out differently than expected.
With shining weapons and beautiful garments
let one rejoice in the other,
for giving and receiving nourish friendship,
if nothing else stands in its way.

THE NATURE OF FOOLS

A foolish man thinks everyone is his friend
who speaks well of him,
but when he has no one to speak for him in court,
and only then does he realize how he is valued.
A foolish man thinks everyone is his friend
who smiles openly at him,
and does not see how ill-disposed others are toward him
in the company of wiser men.
A fool alone thinks he is all-knowing
because he once knew how to defend himself,

but he does not know how to respond wisely,
when one confuses him with questions.
A wretched, ill-tempered wretch
laughs scornfully at everything and everyone;
He simply does not know what he should know:
that he himself is not free from faults.
He does not think himself clever because he is skilled
in asking and saying a little;
For ignorance cannot deny itself for long
when he has to talk to people.

ON AVARICE AND WEALTH

A miser would rather have you as a guest,
if you spared him his ham
and gave the shabby innkeeper
two for one in return.
A fool knows little, he does not even know that
wealth often makes us look like fools;
But if one is rich and the other poor,
no one should blame them for it.
Once the fat man's storehouses were full:
his sons have become beggars,
For wealth flees like the most false of friends,
as quickly as the blink of an eye.

INTEMPERANCE

The glutton acts without reason,
ruining his life;
His stomach has made him a laughingstock
because he foolishly gave in to his desires.
The herd knows when it is time to return home
and stops grazing of its own accord,
Only man is unwise, for he does not know
the limits and measure of his stomach.

WISDOM

You will find this to be the best answer when you ask
the runes of sacred origin
that Wodan, the divine poet, gave us:
to bow silently to fate.
He does not act wisely who watches through the night
and worries about petty things;
He must be tired before the morning dawns,
and his worries are still the same.
Vices and virtues live in me
as they do in the majority of men;
As no one is perfect and completely without fault,
so no one is completely unhappy.
Only he knows who has traveled far
and experienced much,
What kind of spirit men have, what kind of mind they are,
He himself lacks knowledge and will.
As small as sand, so small is the mind
and petty the opinion of men:
In opinion, not all are equal,
and everything on earth is poorly conceived.

POSTHUMOUS FAME

Born so late, a scion does well
even if his father has passed away;
I have never seen a stone standing by the road
unless the son placed it there for his father.
Our cattle die and our friends die
and finally we ourselves think of dying;
But never does the name of a man perish
who has earned just fame.
Our cattle die and our friends die
and finally we ourselves think of dying:
But one thing I know, in eternity lives
the judgment of the dead.

IN WAR

He who seeks the enemy must rise early
to take the head and possessions of another;
The lingering wolf easily escapes its prey,
as victory escapes the sluggish sleeper.
Let not the man retreat from his weapons
a foot's breadth in the open field,
For it is always uncertain when, on the way,
he will need the edge of his sword.
Let no fighter turn his face
towards the setting sun in battle;
Only the man who sees can force victory,
so arrange the wedge for battle accordingly.
It is far better in heroic play
for the fearless man than for the cowardly;
And whatever life brings us,
it is better to show courage than to be timid.

ON DRINKING

Bless the cup to ward off danger
and throw a leek into the drink,
Then I know that it will never avail the envious
to mix poison with your mead.
Hold fast to the mead, but also keep measure
Speak what is profitable, or be silent,
And no one can reproach you as unseemly
when you soon go to bed to sleep.
By far not as good as many think
is ale for the son of this earth,
The more a man drinks, the less
he usually knows what moderation and dignity are.
The simpleton sits gawking around as a guest,
remains silent or stares down at the floor,
But once he drank his share, it became clear

what kind of spirit and nature the simpleton had.
Drunkenness and quarrels have always brought sorrow,
even to the most powerful man,
once in the form of sorrow, another time in the form of death:
much evil comes of it on earth.

AT THE BANQUET

In the morning, the man should prepare a meal
before he rides to his host,
otherwise he will sit and shovel and gobble what he can,
with no time to answer questions.
Be careful to be sociable at the meal,
and be silent when others talk,
keep your eyes open and your ears sharp,
and seek to gain an advantage.
Even the most trusted friends often cannot refrain from teasing
and taunting each other at the meal;
and suspicion and quarrel will hardly end
where guests have forgotten themselves in this way.
Clever thinks the man who makes himself thin
after he has mocked his neighbor;
too late he realizes how, with ridicule at the meal
he has turned his friend into an enemy.
Much too early or much too late
many come to many a meal;
whether the beer is already drunk or not yet brewed;
the beloved comes unwelcome at the wrong time.
The guest should not linger too long
at the same place;
popularity turns to sorrow when he stays too long,
even at the hearth of the most hospitable stranger.

ON THE JOURNEY

Look around you at doors and gates,
be careful where you enter;
Who knows, perhaps your enemy is already lying in wait
in the hallway of the house.
Do not be vainly proud of your intelligence,
be attentive, cautious, and wise;
The wise man enters the threshold with caution,
and silence protects him from harm.
You need experience for a long journey:
at home, everyone can easily help themselves;
With a wink of the eye, one can defeat the one who can do nothing,
when he comes together with the wise.
The lightest bundle, the most portable load
on journeys is caution, choose that:
Even more than wealth, the traveler needs
protection and shelter from danger.
The lightest bundle, the most portable load
on journeys is caution, choose that:
He who has filled himself with beer beforehand
will carry the worst provisions to his destination.
He who is wise combs his hair
and washes himself early in the morning
and also takes his meal in the morning;
for it is uncertain where you will be in the evening,
and it would be bad to forfeit your salvation.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

When I was young, my journey was lonely,
I wandered on confusing paths,
Now I consider myself rich, since I found another:
A man is a man's joy.
Take the most capable, trust him as a friend,
and learn from him all your life.

The pine tree withers, standing alone on the rock,
no bast or bark sprouting from it,
So it is with the man whom no one likes anymore;
who would want to live any longer!
A detour always leads to the wrong friend,
even if he lives right on the path.
But the path leads straight to the true friend,
even if it takes you crossways and sideways.
If you have found the friend you trust completely,
hurry to visit him often,
for weeds and lush grass
grow thick on the path where no one walks anymore.
That, I mean, is friendship, when friend is ready
to advise and act for friend
and to suffer for friend
The worst thing is uncertainty
whether a friend will forsake his friend.
Be not the first to break the bond with your friend
and never do so hastily
If worry grows in your heart
and you have no one to whom you can complain

FALSE FRIENDSHIP

With false companions, friendship burns
as hot as fire for five days;
it sinks into ashes before the sixth day is over,
and all pleasure has already come to an end.
Do not waste a word on bad companions
to confide your misfortune to them;
a rogue that he is, he will hardly repay
your trusting confidence with gratitude.
The power of love
Never reproach one for what befalls them all
in the end:

Even the wisest man is turned into a fool
by his love for a woman.
So do not reproach your neighbor
for falling in love with women;
What often captivates the wise does not ensnare the simple:
The charming beauty of the body.

WARNING AGAINST SORCERY

Never tempt another man's wife
into a secret love affair,
nor sleep in the bosom of a sorceress,
never let her cling to you.
Otherwise you will be beguiled, and at the thing you will forget
what judges and nobles advise,
you will spurn your meal and manly deeds
and seek your bed with a troubled heart.

MEN'S LOVE

Now that I am familiar with both, I confess it loudly:
Man's love for women is fickle!
We think badly of those we find most beautiful;
even the wisest fall for the bait.
With flattering words and rich gifts
one wins the favor of women,
praising their loveliness and fair form:
she who was courted thus always fell.
If you want to seduce a girl
and win her love,
promise her the most beautiful things and make sure you deliver:
you have never given too much for such a good thing.
The vain man who once won
the favor or gift of women
may swell with pride, but he is not wise to remain silent;
now he boasts and shines with pride.

WOMEN'S LOVE

This is how a woman loves, frivolous and false,
Like a poorly trained horse, two years old and shy,
Running unbridled on slippery ice,
Like a ship without a rudder swaying in a storm,
Like a lame man in a hailstorm chasing reindeer
And constantly slipping on slippery stones.
The nature of women
Do not trust the trusting words of a girl,
nor the words of women even less;
Their hearts were created on a spinning wheel
and their bosoms are the dwelling place of fickleness.
The words of a woman have cost many a good man
his head and his collar;
A blasphemous mouth has brought him to his death
through no fault of his own.

THE OLD SINGER

And even if his skin is cracked and hangs around his legs
and he lies among miserable people,
do not mock the hairless singer,
for a gray beard often speaks well:
much wise counsel comes from a wrinkled old man
even if he hangs limply in his pants.

EARTH MAGIC

If you drink Aelrausch, call upon the power of the earth,
For the earth drinks wine and yet does not become drunk!
It frees you from intoxication, like fire from plague,
Like oak from constipation, like ears of corn from poison,
Like moonlight from frenzy, runes from malice,
Like the cricket from domestic quarrels, like dog hair from bites:
Therefore, give the earth something to drink!

WHO SHOULD NOT BE TRUSTED

A cracking bow, a crackling flame,
A yawning wolf, a croaking crow,
A grunting boar, an uprooted tree,
A rising wave, a boiling cauldron,
Flying arrows, falling floods,
coiled snake, one-night egg,
broken weapon, women's bed talk,
playing bear, princely sprout,
sick calf, obliging servant,
flattering servant, seemingly dead hero,
limping mongrel, lamenting whore,
burning house, rearing stallion,
The murderer of his brother, however wide the road:
Let no one be so foolish as to trust lightly.

SHORT SAYINGS

Praise the day in the evening, your wife in death,
The sword not before you have tested it,
The bride after the wedding night, the beer after drinking,
The ice when you have reached the shore safely!
Cut down the tree in winter, set sail in windy weather,
And do not play with the maiden on a cloudy day,
Buy a lean horse and a rusty sword,
Break in the stallion at home, the dog in the farmyard,
Skate on the ice, drink ale by the hearth;
The ship is for sailing, the shield is for defense,
The blade is for striking, and for kissing the woman.

OMENS

"Tell me, Wodan, since you know both
the fate of gods and men:
When I go into battle, what sign promises

salvation for me with the swing of my sword?“
”Many are favorable for the swing of the sword
if only the fighter knew them well:
Trustingly follow the first man
the dark flight of the raven.
There is another: You stand at the exit,
ready for travel and battle,
And see their path in dialogue,
eager for glory, two warriors.
I know this as the third: If you hear the wolf
howling loudly in the ash grove,
and if it runs ahead of you along the forest path,
you will be granted salvation and victory over heroes.
But great danger threatens if your foot stumbles
before you have even reached the battle,
for confusing spirits will come upon you
and seek to wound you.”

THE VALKYRIE'S COUNSEL

This is my first piece of advice—I advise you well:
keep your friendship unblemished;
if you yourself experience evil, do not make your friend pay for it,
otherwise, I say, it will be your death.
This is my second piece of advice: do not swear oaths
unless they are truly true,
for eternal punishment awaits those who break their oaths:
only a wretch dishonors his oath.
This is my third piece of advice: do not let yourself be judged
with foolish drunks;
Otherwise, the wise man easily succumbs
to the evil taunts of rogues.
This is my fourth piece of advice: Do not rest
on the way in the house of the Here,
For it is better to go than to stay as a guest

even if night overtakes you.
This is my fifth piece of advice: If you see rows
beautiful women on the benches,
do not let the beautiful ones rob you of your sleep,
nor lure them lustfully to kiss you.
My sixth piece of advice: many speak too much
in their intoxication at the table,
avoid quarreling with a drunken man;
wine has taken all his wit.
My fifth piece of advice: If revenge calls you
to battle with a powerful man,
Then rather strike yourself dead and lose your possessions
than perish in a burning castle.
My eighth piece of advice: Respect the law,
and flee falsehood and lies,
Do not seduce girls and married women
into lustful games of love.
This is my ninth piece of advice: bury with honor
those you find dead on the battlefield;
whether they died of sickness, drowned at sea,
or were slain by the sword.
This is my tenth piece of advice: do not trust the words
of the man whose father you killed;
a wolf will grow up in the son of your enemy,
even if he willingly accepted the blood money.

VALHALLA

Five hundred gates and four times ten
I know in wide Valhalla,
From each one eight hundred warriors draw forth
To fight with Fenrir, the wolf.
Easy to recognize are those who come to Wodan,
The blessed hall of the father of the army;
Spears cover the roof like rafters

And shields like golden shingles.
Those who come to Wodan can easily recognize him,
the blessed hall of the father of the army;
A wolf hangs there before the western gate
and an eagle hovers above him.
The fence of the dead is what rises before Valhalla,
highly sacred before the holy gates.
Though the fence is old, they do not suspect much,
no matter how the castle is locked.
The winds rage and roar around it,
the sun barely holds itself in the sky,
the hordes of the dead strive laboriously
to wander through the storm to Valhalla.
Cook Sootface lets the coal-black wild boar cook
in the soot-black cauldron,
with spicy bacon, but few know
what the Einherjar actually eat.
Greedy and Eager, the wolves
Wodan, father of victory, feeds himself.
Allfather, Walvater, Wodan lives
forever and only by wine alone.

THE DWELLINGS OF THE GODS

Wodan speaks:
High above I see a sacred land,
close to the Aesir and the Albs.
On Trussburg, high above, thunder reigns until the day
when the gods will perish.
Five hundred rooms and four times ten
seem to me to be the building of Thunder,
Of all the dwellings, I know that
my son occupies the largest.
Eibental is the name of the place where Uller
made his home,

Albenheim was given by the gods to Froh
at the beginning of time as a dowry.
The third hall is covered with silver
by cheerful gods,
it is called Wölbehall, I vaulted it myself,
I, Allfather, once in primeval times.
The fourth is called Torrent, it is swirled around
by the cooling springs;
Wodan and Saga drink there every day
joyfully from golden cups.
Glanzheim is the fifth: golden glass
spreads far and wide from Valhalla.
There I, the prince of the army, gather the heroes for battle
and choose the dead every day.
The sixth of the sites is Trummheim, where Diek,
the mighty giant, dwells.
There, Schade, North's beautiful bride,
in the old fortress of his father.
The seventh castle with its glittering halls,
Broadview, was built by Balder,
No other land, wherever it may be,
is as free from crime as Balder's.
The eighth belongs to Heimdolt, heavenly Sik,
Walter and keeper of the bridge,
The guardian of the gods enjoys himself comfortably
there with excellent drink from the mete.
The ninth is Völkerfeld, Freia is called there
whoever takes the seat in the hall;
The souls of the dead she chooses daily
and leaves their bodies to Wodan.
Gleisner is the tenth, gold are the pillars
and silver the roof over the hall;
Forsete reigns there the long day
striving to settle all disputes.
Nauheim is the eleventh, where Nord, the rich one,

has built his towering house;
The powerful one rejoices, without blemish or fault,
in his high-ceilinged hall.
Overgrown on a green wall
lies Widar's wooded dwelling;
Wodan's offspring once leaps from his horse,
ready to avenge his father.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

From the flesh of Urgebraus, the earth was created,
from his blood, the roaring sea,
from his legs, the mountains, from his hair, the trees,
from his skull, the cheerful sky.
From his eyebrows, the benevolent gods built
Midgard for the human race.
The clouds arose, storm-tossed,
from the giant's shaggy brain.

THE WORLD ASH

The ash tree suffers more misdeeds than humans can imagine
and endures hardship:
At its top are the deer, in its trunk is decay,
and at its roots gnaws the worm of envy.
Four deer bite, bending their necks,
and crunch the buds of the ash tree:
Delusion and sleep and weather and blow
are the names of the deer.
An eagle perches high in the branches of the ash tree,
well protected by wisdom,
A hawk peers watchfully between its eyes,
pale from weather and vigilance.
The squirrel Nagezahn runs up and down
from the top to the root of the ash tree,

carrying the eagle's words, which it heard above,
deeper down to the gnawing worm of envy.
Three roots turn toward three sides of the world
from the world tree, the giant ash tree.
One toward Hel, toward the giants, the other
the third covers the home of humans.
And more worms swarm under the roots
of the ash tree, as humans well know!

THE GOAT HEIDRUN

The goat named Heidrun stands above Valhalla and grazes on the branches of the famous tree whose name is often mentioned and which is called Lärad. From her udder flows so much mead that she fills a vessel every day, so large that all the Einheerer have enough to drink.

Heidrun, the goat, stands on Heervater's hall
and grazes on the branches of the ash tree;
she fills the jug with clear mead,
and her milk never diminishes.
How the demons came into the world
Loge begot the world wolf with vice,
and from the stallion of terror himself he received the slayer
Finally, he gave birth to the worst of the monsters,
The world-ring serpent that devours Midgard.
Loge ate the heart of a woman in the woods,
Almost burned by lust, Loge found it,
Loge became pregnant by the shameful woman,
From this comes the race of evil on earth.

THE RAVENS OF WOTAN

Two ravens sit on Wodan's shoulders and tell
him everything they see and hear.
They are called Thought and Memory.

He sends them out at dawn to fly to all worlds;
at noon they return, and thus he becomes aware of many things.
That is why people call him the raven god. It is said of him:
Gedank and Gedenk fly around the fields
of Midgard, the home of men, every day;
Gedank, I fear, will not fly back one day,
and I remember Gedenk with even greater fear.

THE WORLD STREAMS

In front of Heervater's hall stands Arghorn, the Hirfch
and eats from the branches of the ash tree,
From the high antlers it drips into the depths
and from it the streams arise.
One is called Gerinn, the other Wegschnell
and Volkwang is how I interpret the third;
They first trickle around the gardens of the gods,
Then they flow through the realms of mortals
and fall from here to Hella.

CREATION OF HUMANS

The sons of Wodan, Höner and Loge, once walked to the seashore. There they found two trees and created human beings from them. One gave them breath and life, the other understanding and movement, the third appearance, speech, hearing, and sight. They also gave them clothes and names: they called the man Esch and the woman Embla, and from them comes the human race, to whom Midgard was given as their home. This is what is said in the Seeress's Song:

Once upon a time, three of the race of gods,
strong and gentle, walked on the shore of the sea.
There they found, abandoned and helpless,
Esch and Embla, still without purpose.

They had no sense, nor did they have souls,
no life, no warmth, nor divine form.
Wodan gave them breath, Höner gave them inner strength,
Loge gave them warmth, and the other gave them bright blood.

THE CREATION OF THE DWARVES

The dwarves were created first and found life in Urgebraus' flesh and were there as maggots. But according to the will of the gods, they were given human understanding and human form and lived under the earth in the rocks. Mutsauger was the name of the first of these dwarves, Döser the other. So says the song of the Seeress' Vision:

Then the eternal Afen hurried to the judgment seat,
highly holy gods, and held council
who should create the race of dwarves
from Urgebraus' blood, fine arms and legs.
Then Mutsauger was deemed a good master
and Döser second for such dwarves.
These were the dwarves that Mutsauger begot:
Morning and Noon, Midnight, Evening,
New Light and Low Light, Nebler and Nächtler,
Räuſchler and Strecker, Necker and Schlecker,
With Neuer and Neurat I would now have named,
As is right, the dwarves' advisor and judge.
Many more were created in human form
Dwarves from the earth, as Döser described them:
Alb and Uralb, Oberalb and Jungalb,
Wolfalb and Windalb and Alben as guardians
Schlaudieb, Schnappebald, Schnellimzank, Schlaps,
Pfeilgeschwind, Streitgewandt, Pfiffig and Stracks,
Heftig and Hurtig, Fürwiß and Fuchs,
Freshface, Nimblefoot, Resourceful, and Swift
Finally, the dwarves from the branch of the Nebler

Up to Lofar, the ancestor, are still to be named;
He drew his tribe from solid rock
Through murky depths up the valleys.
From him come Träufler, Troßig, and Töter,
Bildner, Bauer, Brenner, and Bräuner,
Kühler, Klärer, Klopfer, and Stopfer,
Funkensprüh, Eichenschild, Eisenschmied, Färber—
So knowledge teaches us, as long as the world stands,
For all time about the race of dwarves.

JOURNEY OF THE SUN

Early awake and swift they rise, the suns,
weary and tired they draw themselves upward;
A shady shield hangs at the neck of each of the stallions
to protect the earth.
The shining cooler is called the airspace,
the shimmering shield in front of the sun.
Mountains and lands would have burned long ago
if the flickering shell had fallen.
Stürmer rushes after the shining one,
the wolf to the sheltering forest,
Hast, the second, rushes toward the heavenly bride
on flickering paths ahead.
The best of everything
The greatest is the world ash tree among the trees,
The most beautiful is the bellows among the ships,
The first is Wodan among the Aesir,
The swiftest is Schleifner among the horses,
The best is Beberast among the bridges,
Brage the best poet, Garm the best mastiff,
And Hochbein the best hub.

MIME AND WODAN

Wodan stood on the mountain with a flashing sword
and had his helmet on his head,
Then wisdom murmured from Mime's mouth,
he whispered runes of truth to him:
The runes, he said, are engraved
On the shield that stands before the shining sun,
On the ears of the early riser and the hooves of the swift,
On the wheel that turns beneath the chariot of the thunderer,
On the teeth of the grinder, on the runners of the sled,
On the paw of the bear, on the tongue of the poet,
On the claws of the wolf, on the talons of the eagle,
On the bloody sword, on the bridge railing,
On the helping hand and on the healing foot,
On glass and on gold for the happiness of men,
In spice and wine, on the lord's high seat,
On the spear's point, on the horse's back,
On the night owl's beak, on the nail of the Norn.
So Wodan first carved them, then he scraped them off
and mixed them with holy mead
and threw them far and wide:
Some to the Aesir and some to the Albs
and some to wise Vanir
and some to the people of men.
Understand the runes and divine the sticks,
The strongest sticks, the most enduring sticks,
which the prime poets thought up,
which the prime gods dug up,
and the god of all gods colored.

RUNE MAGIC

Dig victory runes if you desire victory,
and carve them into the cover of your helmet,
knowing them well on the back and front

and call twice to Ziu.
Learn the Aelrunes, that no cunning woman
may betray your trust with poison,
carve them on your horn, on the back of your hand
and write “Not” on your fingernail.
Know the birth runes for the safe delivery of a child
and its release from the womb,
draw signs of salvation on its hands and joints
and ask the Dises for assistance.
Learn the storm runes to calm the sea
and bring sailors safely to shore,
Engrave storm runes in the oars with fire
and also mark the stern and rudder:
No matter how black the waves, no matter how steep the swell,
you will find your way home and be safe from the sea.
Learn the runes of the sea if you want to be a doctor
and know how to treat wounds;
Carve them on the bark and leaves of trees
whose branches lean toward the east.
Learn the runes of justice, that with angry words
your enemy may never harm you;
Envelop the quarrel, weave around the dispute
and see the rods come together,
Until the day of judgment, when from far and wide
the people gather for assembly.
Know the runes of poetry, if you want to be wiser
than all the others,
created by Wodan, carved by Wodan,
who also devised their interpretation,
intoxicated by the drink that once flowed
from Mime's brain and horns.
These are the Astrunes, these are the Gebärrunen,
Find the Aelrunen and all the Dichtrunen,
Find the Siegurnen full of strength.
And whoever recognizes them, neither confused nor corrupted,

Let him take them for his own
until the world of the gods comes to an end!

SACRIFICIAL SAYING

Do you know how to rule, do you know how to advise?
Do you know how to color, do you know how to ask?
Do you know how to pray and how to make sacrifices?
Do you know how to slaughter and do you know how to judge?
Better not to rule than to rule too much,
Better not to advise than to advise too much,
Better not to color than to color too much,
Better not to ask than to ask too much,
Better not to pray than to pray too much,
Better not to sacrifice than to sacrifice too much,
Better not to slaughter than to slaughter too much,
Better not to divide than to divide too much:
For a gift always seeks its reward.

WOTAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF RUNES

It is time to speak from the speaker's chair!
At Urda, the Norn's sacred well
I sat silently, watching and thinking.
Then I heard the speech of HIGH.
He spoke of runes, of the counsel of the gods,
Of the scratching of the runes, of the counsel of the runes
in the hall of HIGH!
From the hall of HIGH
I heard this being said:
I know how I hung on the wind-chilled tree
nine icy nights,
Wounded by the Geir, consecrated to Wodan:
I consecrated myself to myself
On the mighty tree that hides from man

where it grew out of the roots.
They offered me neither bread nor wine,
so I bent down in search,
recognized the runes, took them up lamenting,
until I sank down from the tree.
Now I began to become and to be wise,
to grow and to feel well.
From the word, word developed word
and work developed from work into works:
Now I know the sayings like no princely woman,
and none of the children of men.
And if these sayings are also learnable for you, son of man,
for a long time to come:
grasp them, learn them,
use them, hear them,
be saved, keep them!

ᚠ

The first promises to help you
in sorrow, infirmity, and pain:
In eternal change, man passes
from passing away to new creation.

ᚢ

I name another thing that is necessary for all
who serve as healing physicians:
Know yourself, then you will know the world,
and learn to separate evil from its cause.

ᚦ

I grasp a third thing, if danger threatens me:
to bind my enemies with magic:
I blunt the steel of my angry opponent
so that his sword cuts no more than a stick.

ᚠ

This I know as the fourth, when the enemy throws
shackles around my feet and hands:
the bonds fall from my legs when I sing the song,
and the shackles fall from my hands.

ᚱ

This is the fifth thing I can do: if an enemy arrow
is shot into the crowd;
no matter how brightly it clangs, I will stop its force
if I only fix my eyes firmly on it.

ᚲ

A sixth is mine: if a man wounds me
with the fresh root of a tree;
it is not me who is wounded, but the man himself is destroyed
the ruin with which he threatened me.

ᚾ

A seventh I learned, when the hall blazes
in fire around the bench and my companions;
however wide it burns, I banish the heat
as soon as I sing the magic song.

ᛃ

An eighth is mine, useful to all the people
in times of need;
Where hatred arises between man and man,
I can quickly settle it.

ᛁ

This I sing as the ninth, when distress at sea urges me
to protect my ship from the waves;
I command the storm to be still, however steep the sea,
and lull the waves to sleep.

ᛃ

A tenth I find, when enchanted women
fly through the air;
I cause them to leave confused
by violence and destructive striving:

ᛉ

I can do this as the eleventh, when I lead
my dear friend into battle;
I sing it on his shield, that he may be victorious in battle
and be protected on all sides.

ᛋ

A twelfth I sing, seeing in the branches
of the hemp tree the hanged man swinging;
He rises from the trunk, and must speak to me,
if I interpret the runes correctly.

ᛏ

A thirteenth I name, when I baptize my son,
the young one, with holy water;
When he stands before the enemy, he cannot fall,
no sword will strike him down to dust.

ᛒ

I sing a fourteenth to the assembled people
when naming the divine names;
No one ignorant knows how to say
no one ignorant can tell.

ᛗ

I know a fifteenth, the power of the people, the dwarf,
who sings early before the gates of the day,
to the Aesir for strength, to the Elves for power,
but to me, Allfather, for wisdom.

ᛚ

I speak a sixteenth to the stubborn maiden,
to awaken her desire and longing;
I change the heart of the delightful woman,
so that her desires turn to me.

ᛟ

I know a seventeenth, with wise law
to embrace two lives in love;
And each is willing: no virgin woman
will leave me lightly after that.

ᛞ

I learned an eighteenth, but I would never let
a woman or girl know it,
For everyone always knows his own best
That leads me to the conclusion of the songs
Let her be the one who lies in my arms
As my lawful wife and sister.

Now I have sung the high song
Here in the hall of HIGH
Necessary for the Aesir, not for the Jotuns!
Hail to him who learns it!
Hail to him who teaches it!
So take advantage
Of the salvation you have heard!

BERSERKER
BOOKS